

Jesuit-Krauss-McCormick Library

BV4253 .F755I3 v.2

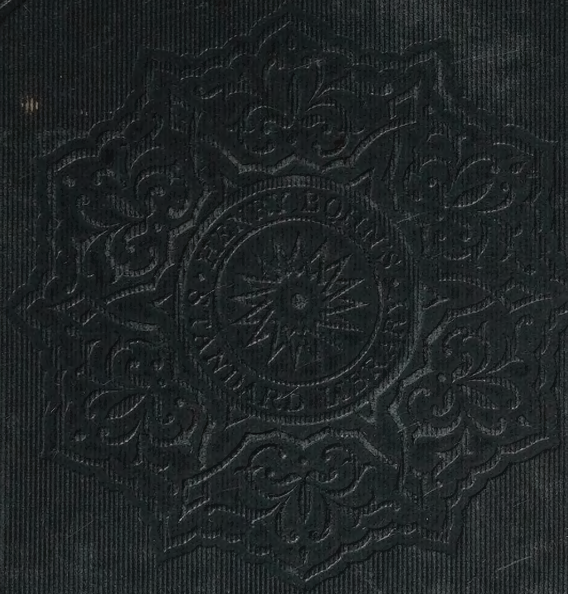
Foster, John

MAIN

Lectures delivered at Broadmead Chapel,



3 9967 00225 7330



8332
BOHN'S STANDARD LIBRARY.

Post 8vo., Elegantly Printed, and bound in Cloth, at 3s. 6d. per Vol.

1. THE MISCELLANEOUS WORKS AND REMAINS OF THE REV. ROBERT HALL, with Memoir by DR. GREGORY, and Essay by JOHN FOSTER. *Portrait.*
- 2 & 3. ROSCOE'S LIFE AND PONTIFICATE OF LEO X., Edited by his Son, with the Copyright Notes, Documents, &c. In 2 Vols. *Portraits.*
4. SCHLEGEL'S LECTURES ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY. Translated from the German, with a Memoir by J. R. ROBERTSON, Esq. *Portrait.*

ACCESSION NUMBER

SHelf NUMBER

The Virginia Library

McCormick

Theological Seminary

of the

Presbyterian Church, Chicago.

From the *Rev. George Morris* Fund.

RECEIVED

44. SCHILLER'S WORKS. Vol. IV. ["The Robbers," "Fiesko," "Love and Intrigue," and "The Ghost-Seer."] Translated by HENRY G. BOHN.
46. SCHLEGEL'S LECTURES ON MODERN HISTORY
47. LAMARTINE'S HISTORY OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION OF 1848.
- 48 & 50. JUNIUS'S LETTERS, with Notes, Additions, Essay, Index, &c. 2 Vols.
- 49, 55, 60, 65, 71. VASARI'S LIVES OF THE MOST CELEBRATED PAINTERS, SCULPTORS, AND ARCHITECTS. Translated by MRS. FOSTER, with Notes. Complete in 5 Vols., with Index.

4950

LECTURES

DELIVERED AT

BROADMEAD CHAPEL, BRISTOL,

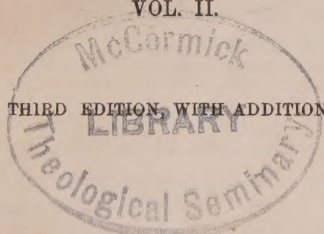
BY THE LATE

JOHN FOSTER.

AUTHOR OF "ESSAYS ON DECISION OF CHARACTER," ETC.

VOL. II.

THIRD EDITION, WITH ADDITIONS.



LONDON:

G. BOHN, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

M.DCCC.LIII.

O Morris

7332

J. HADDON AND SON, PRINTERS, CASTLE STREET, FINSBURY

130
4253
F755
v. 2

CONTENTS.

LECTURE XXXVII.

THE CESSATION OF WAR, AN EFFECT OF THE PREVALENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

(PART I.)

Page.

ISAIAH ii. 4; MICAH iv. 3. They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more 1

LECTURE XXXVIII.

THE CESSATION OF WAR, AN EFFECT OF THE PREVALENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

(PART II.)

ISAIAH ii. 4. They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more 15

LECTURE XXXIX.

THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF DANIEL.

DANIEL vi. 28. So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian 28

LECTURE XL.

THE THREE JEWS IN BABYLON.

DANIEL iii. Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon, &c. 42

LECTURE XLI.

BENEFICIAL CO-OPERATION OF ALL THINGS FOR THE CHRISTIAN.

- ROMANS viii. 28. We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose 57

LECTURE XLII.

ACCESS TO GOD.

- HEBREWS xi. 6. He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him . . . 69

LECTURE XLIII.

SIN MANIFESTED BY THE LAW.

- ROMANS vii. 13. That sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful 83

LECTURE XLIV.

NOAH AND THE DELUGE.

- HEBREWS xi. 7. By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith 95

LECTURE XLV.

CHRIST, THOUGH INVISIBLE, THE OBJECT OF DEVOUT AFFECTION.

- X 1 PETER i. 8. Whom having not seen ye love; in whom though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory 107

LECTURE XLVI.

THE APOSTOLIC ALTERNATIVE.

- PHILIPPIANS i. 21. To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain . . . 118

LECTURE XLVII.

THE AUTUMN AND ITS MORAL ANALOGIES.

- ISAIAH lxiv. 6. We all do fade as a leaf 127

4550

CONTENTS.

v

Page.

LECTURE XLVIII.

PETER'S DELIVERANCE FROM PRISON.

ACTS xii. Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hand to vex certain of the church, &c.	140
---	-----

LECTURE XLIX.

THE POWERS OF THE WORLD TO COME.

HEBREWS vi. 5. The powers of the world to come	149
--	-----

LECTURE L.

PERSEVERANCE IN PRAYER.

LUKE xviii. 1. And he spake a parable unto them, to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint	155
---	-----

LECTURE LI.

THE LOVE OF MONEY.

1 TIMOTHY vi. 10. The love of money is the root of all evil	161
---	-----

LECTURE LII.

GOD NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS.

ACTS x. 34. God is no respecter of persons	170
--	-----

LECTURE LIII.

THE MEETING OF FRIENDS.

EXODUS xviii. 17. They asked each other of their welfare	179
--	-----

LECTURE LIV.

THE MEMORY OF THE JUST.

PROVERBS x. 7. The memory of the just is blessed	189
--	-----

LECTURE LV.

THE CONSIDERATION OF DEATH.

DEUTERONOMY xxxii. 29. O that they would consider their latter end	198
--	-----

LECTURE LVI.

PRACTICAL ATHEISM.

EPHESIANS ii. 12. Without God in the world 203

LECTURE LVII.

MAN'S DEVICES AND GOD'S COUNSEL.

PROVERBS xix. 21. There are many devices in a man's heart ;
nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord. it shall stand 218

LECTURE LVIII.

CHRIST WALKING ON THE SEA.

MATTHEW xiv. 22—33 ; MARK vi. 45—56. And straightway Jesus
constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him
unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away, &c. 229

LECTURE LIX.

ROBBERY OF GOD.

MALACHI iii. 8. Will a man rob God ? 240

LECTURE LX.

THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS.

ZECHARIAH iv. 10. Who hath despised the day of small things ? 253

LECTURE LXI.

ON CONTEMPT FOR SMALL BEGINNINGS.

[A DISCOURSE PREACHED ON BEHALF OF THE SERAMPORE MISSION.]

ZECHARIAH iv. 10. Who hath despised the day of small things ? 269

LECTURE LXII.

AGAINST WEARINESS IN WELL-DOING.

GALATIANS vi. 9. Let us not be weary in well-doing : for in due
season we shall reap, if we faint not 286

LECTURE LXIII.

THE VOLUNTARY PRINCIPLE, IN REFERENCE TO THE ERECTION OF
PLACES OF WORSHIP.

- ISAIAH xli. 6. They helped every one his neighbour: and every one
said to his brother, Be of good courage 301

LECTURE LXIV.

ON THE INSTITUTION OF PREACHING.

[PREACHED ON BEHALF OF THE BRISTOL BAPTIST COLLEGE IN 1820.]

- ROMANS x. 14. How shall they hear without a preacher 315

LECTURE LXV.

THE SUPERIOR OBLIGATIONS OF CHRISTIANS.

- MATTHEW v. 47. What do ye more than others 333

LECTURE LXVI.

INEFFICACIOUS CONVICTIONS.

- ROMANS vii. 18. To will is present with me, but how to perform
that which is good I find not 349

LECTURE LXVII.

DOUBLE-MINDEDNESS.

- JAMES i. 8. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways 361

LECTURE LXVIII.

OUR IGNORANCE OF OUR FUTURE MODE OF EXISTENCE.

- 1 JOHN iii. 2. It doth not yet appear what we shall be 374

LECTURE LXIX.

THE CHRISTIAN IDEA OF THE PERFECTIBILITY OF MAN.

- 1 CORINTHIANS xiii. 10. When that which is perfect is come, then
that which is in part shall be done away 386

LECTURE LXX.

THE RELIGIOUS USE OF MEMORIALS.

- JOSHUA xxiv. 26, 27. And Joshua took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of the Lord. And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold this stone shall be a witness unto us, for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us ; it shall be therefore a witness unto you lest ye deny your God 396

LECTURE LXXI.

THE DIVINE JEWELS.

- MALACHI iii. 17. They shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in the day when I make up my jewels 405



LECTURES.

LECTURE XXXVII.

THE CESSATION OF WAR, AN EFFECT OF THE
PREVALENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

(PART I.)

ISAIAH ii. 4. MICAH iv. 3.

“ They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks ; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

NOTWITHSTANDING any accompanying references, we cannot hesitate to take this for a prediction of times yet to come. For, most evidently, it has never yet been fulfilled ; there has been nothing at all approaching or resembling a fulfilment. It is true that, when the religion of Christ came to the world, it came with the spirit and principles of an all-pacific dispensation, (*“ On earth peace, good will towards men ;”*) and true, that, in the degree of its actual prevalence, this has been the effect. But, how far is this from anything adequate to the terms of the prediction, which exhibit a bright and ample idea of this spirit and tendency of Christianity realized, reduced to fact, on the great scale ! Other prophecies also are given in as large

and absolute terms, of the same purport, and have been, hitherto, as little accomplished. And that ultimate efficacious prevalence of our Lord's religion, which all his disciples regard as certainly predicted, must necessarily include the cessation of *War*, include the fulfilment, on the grand scale, of the predictions that it shall cease. Thus far, we all know too well how little they have been accomplished. This flagrant stain of our history, (the history of our whole race,) has come down to the yet last page, and the greatest parts of its records have been written in blood.

We may contemplate, a few moments, this prominent character of all ages. Yes,—it is as conjoined with very nearly the beginning of our race, that we have to look upon this direful phenomenon. But how strange, for a creature, come fresh, living, and pure, from the beneficent Creator's hands! The *least* that we *can* think of that original state of Man, is, that there must have been in his soul the principle of all kind affections,—all benevolent sympathies; a disposition to be happier for the happiness of a kindred being; a complacent delight in promoting it; an exquisite sense of reciprocal right,—of benevolent justice; no tincture of a wrongful selfishness; a state of feeling that would have been struck with horror at the thought of inflicting suffering. And from the creature thus originally constituted, all the race was to descend. Can such a nature ever rage with malignity and revenge, and riot in suffering and destruction? Yet, in this original family, in the very first degree of the descent,—war and slaughter began. Men may argue and quibble as long as it will amuse them, against our notion of "*the Fall*."—Here was Fall enough!—and demonstration enough—how deep!

We have to contemplate the primeval family spreading out in all directions. And we may be sure, that the

dreadful spirit disclosed in the first slaughter, was not extinguished in that crime. Revelation gives us very little more of the antediluvian history than a brief deduction of genealogy. But, the character of that period is manifest from what is said at the end of it. (*"God saw that the wickedness of man was great, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually,"* Gen. vi. 5. *"The earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence,"* Gen. vi. 12.) And in the account we are told of some that *"became mighty men, men of renown."* How, is it most likely that this might was displayed—this renown acquired? Partly, perhaps, in a war against savage beasts, but far more in another way—in the exploits of that *"violence which filled the earth,"* and doomed it to be overwhelmed. Assuredly, that universal *"violence"* would in no spot be limited to raging passions and fierce language; the corresponding deeds would be there! There was immeasurable room for men on the earth, but they *would* keep close enough for mutual aggression. We may venture to surmise that it was partly owing to the destruction by war, that the race did not spread more extensively over the earth. In so long a lapse of ages, with so strong a natural life in the individuals, and with probably much fewer diseases than now,—with all this in their favour, it would seem they did not spread to this part of the globe—to Europe, as there is great and accumulating evidence to show; for there have never been found any human bones in the deposits attributable to the Deluge, in these countries; while it has lately been proved in a most singular and striking manner, that in *this* country there lived at that period the elephant, hippopotamus, rhinoceros, hyæna, &c., and some of the kinds of animals we now have here.

While we think of the deadly conflicts of those early

ages, the idea may occur to us, of the peculiar atrocity of destroying a life which might, in the course of nature, have lasted so long. Living beings cloven down, or mortally pierced, or poisoned, or burnt, that might have lived seven or eight centuries,—for improvement,—for serving God,—for usefulness,—for whatever happiness there might have been in this world, or preparation for another. At length, another power invaded their fields of battle; the furies of their warfare were quenched; their trophies, fortresses, monuments, swept away. “Their furies quenched,” we have just said; but it would be no violently improbable imagination that they might burn and blaze at the very last; for, there have been examples to prove, that an assemblage of men, on one spot whence there is no escape from peril and destruction, may kindle with an insane rage against one another, and perish as it were before their time, by mutual violence. (Wreck of the French ship *Medusa*.)

The world began anew, in the person and family of the selected patriarch, whom alone “*the Lord had seen righteous in that generation.*” Now then for a better race,—if the human nature were intrinsically good, or corrigible by the most awful dispensations. It was by the descendants of the only faithful servant and friend of the Almighty found on earth, that the desolated world was to be re-peopled. A new surface was spread over the earth, concealing beneath their feet the entire race that had stained its former face with crimes and blood. Yet from beneath the ground, that enormous multitude of the victims of the Divine justice, might seem, to thought, to utter a warning against renewing the scenes of violence. But, all in vain! The Flood could not cleanse the *nature* of man; nor the awful memory and memorials of it repress the coming forth of selfishness, pride, ambition, anger, and revenge.

The Sacred History, after just recounting some successions of names in the different branches of the new race, limits its narrative to the origin and progress of what became the Jewish people—Abraham and his posterity. Their history, however, in proceeding downward, involves much of that of the surrounding nations. And some of the profane histories go far back into the period subsequent to the Deluge. And what is so conspicuous, over all the view, as wars and devastations? There is one portion of this tragical exhibition which we are to take out of the account of ordinary war; namely, the war of extirpation against the Canaanites. This was by Divine appointment for the punishment and destruction of transcendent and incorrigible wickedness; and is to be placed nearly on the same moral ground as God's immediate inflictions in the flood, the land of Egypt, and Sodom and Gomorrah. But, setting this portion of the history aside,—think of the long course of sanguinary conflicts within the boundary of the selected nation itself, between Israel and Judah. Besides the slaughters, of battle and massacre, within each, separately, of these two divisions of that people,—add, all their wars with Syria and Egypt, with the Babylonian, Grecian, and Roman powers—closed finally, in that most awful catastrophe, the siege and destruction of Jerusalem.

Then, glance a moment over the wider view of the whole ancient world; as far abroad, and as high up in time, as history has made it visible. The human race is exhibited, in some regions, in the form of numerous small states. But, their smallness, of size and strength, was not the measure of their passions. What we are certain to read of them is, that they attacked and fought one another with the ferocity of wild beasts. By some ambitious "*conquering hero*" a great number of these were subdued and moulded together into a great kingdom, on one large space of the

earth,—and the same on another. And then, with a tremendous clash, these empires came into conflict. And the ordinary, and often repeated story, is, of vast tumultuary battles,—the exterminating rage of the victors,—territories overrun and reduced to a desert,—innumerable victims perishing. At length, these empires, small and great, were swallowed up by one enormous power, which subdued them all, (within the greatest part of the known world,) by a succession of martial operations, in which a greater number of human beings perished than would have been enough to constitute an empire. So effectually was this achieved, that, at the time our Lord came on earth, there was a state of peace established (such as it was) to an extent over the world never known before. It was but a temporary calm; and doubtless the storm was raging all the while in remote lands beyond the great circuit of the Roman empire.

But, now, if we could take one grand compass of view, over the earth, and down through time, from that period to this! What a vision of destruction! Think of all that tormented and desolated the earth, during the long period of the fall of the Roman Empire;—of that inundation of ravage and death, the progress and utmost extension of the Mahomedan power;—of the mighty account of slaughter in the Spanish conquest of America;—of the almost incessant wars among the states of civilized Europe, down nearly to the present hour. Think even of the bloody wars within our own island, especially on the Border, between its northern and southern divisions;—the hundreds of remaining fortresses, monumental of war. And, to complete the account,—as if the whole solid earth were not wide enough,—the sea has been coloured with blood, and received into its dark gulf myriads of slain,—as if it could not destroy enough by its tempests and wrecks! Such a general view is awful and horrid enough,—and we need not dwell, here,

on the detail of the horrors of war, though that is undoubtedly the way to bring its frightful aspect the closest to our apprehension. Imagine the spectacle of a violent death inflicted on *one* human being, with the instruments of war; multiply this, to the extent of a great battle—with all the diversity of modes in which the living body may suffer, may be smitten, lacerated, mutilated, and destroyed; and what there is in the minds of the mutual inflictors and sufferers;—and all the consequences to survivors—to relatives—and to the condition of the inhabitants.

But now reflect a moment! What a state of the spirit of mankind,—of their heart and intellect—is here disclosed before us!

Again; what a state of their social constitution, and of their national situation, that the mass and strength of nations should, over the greatest part of the world, be at the absolute disposal of a few individuals, for this very business of war. And also; what a state of the moral sense, or whatever we may name it, that there should be whole hosts of men, leaders and followers, capable of holding themselves totally divested of all personal responsibility for right and wrong, in the zealous prosecution of such achievements. And, once more; what a state of Christianity, as to any real, vital prevalence of it, among the nations denominated Christian. Our text must indeed be a prophecy yet unfulfilled. And so much the better for us, that it is not one of those of which the accomplishment is gone by. In looking toward the time when it will be accomplished, we have, it is too true, a formidable prospect before us; the fair vision beams from a distance, through a fearful intervening gloom. Looking at what men are as yet, compared with what they are to be in that better age, we may presage what is to come between! There will, meanwhile, be the prayers of all good men in the world;

and the zealous endeavours of many of them to enlighten and improve mankind. And particularly, it should be inculcated on religious and intellectual persons, on tutors and parents, that they set themselves, systematically, as opportunities offer, to counterwork that maddening enchantment of the "*glory*" of war; of war considered just merely as the field of great exploit. Let them strive to break up, in the view of young and ardent minds, this splendid pestilent delusion about heroes, conquests, fame, and glory.

We said, "war simply regarded as an affair of heroism and great exploit,"—war taken independently of the *cause*—the *object*—the *reason*—the *justice*; excepting, therefore, the heroic spirit as displayed in some very rare cases of war; that is to say, where it has been displayed on the pure ground, and in the pure love, of justice,—as in defence of liberty,—in vindication of the weak and injured,—in depressing the proud, ambitious, and cruel,—in resisting the oppressions of powerful wickedness; such examples (if we should mention names) as those of Judas Maccabeus,—Alfred,—Wallace,—Kosciusko,—Washington.

This will seem assuming the possibility of cases in which war would be just, and not violate Christian principles. In passing, may we be allowed to advert, a moment, to that topic?

We would observe,—it is most readily allowed, that any principles upon which a Christian casuist would justify war, under certain possible circumstances, would not justify, perhaps, one in twenty of the wars that have been waged. Very rare has been the instance of a war on either side, strictly and purely defensive, of either the nation itself, or any other endangered or oppressed people, depending on its protection. But suppose any case that should answer to the strictness of this condition,—what then?

It is within the easy recollection of many of us, that

about four or five years since, our government in India had a war with a nation (if we may name it so) called *Pindarees*. In fact, they were a terrible assemblage of outlaws, robbers, and murderers, to the number of fifty thousand, occupying a strong and almost inaccessible tract on the northern frontier. Thence, with impetuous rapidity they rushed down, all horsemen, on the country, inhabited by a population of cultivators; seized whatever could easily be carried off—and with furious eagerness demolished, burnt, destroyed, the rest. But far more than this, they were universally possessed with the spirit of murder; they killed the people, without regard to sex or age; not only so, but when sufficiently at leisure for such amusement, they inflicted excruciating tortures previous to death.

Now, when the Governor-General had intelligence of this—*what was he to do? what, acting as a Christian? Nothing?* What, as a great magistrate, did he “*bear the sword*” for? What was he Governor at all for? to live in splendid state, and number and tax the people? Or was he to direct that prayers should be made in the churches for something very like a miracle? And, on failure of that, prayers that the wretched people he governed might be all meekly resigned to their fate? and that even, should the fell and fiendish legion, being unresisted, chose to pursue their way all down to Calcutta, all the people in their track, that could not escape, and at last himself and the people of the city—might be enabled calmly to submit to a sovereign dispensation of Providence?

He did not do this. He chose rather to act on the rule of his appointment, to be “*a terror to evil doers,*” “*a minister of God, a revenger, to execute wrath upon them that do evil,*” (Rom. xiii. 4.) But, if war is in all possible cases wrong, he perpetrated an enormous crime against Christianity, in marching his armies with a celerity unparalleled

in that climate, and encountering, intercepting, and exterminating the murderers, so that the surviving people could feel themselves in peace.

Make a supposition respecting this our own land, which is now literally *the last asylum of political, civil, and religious liberty in Europe*. For its being so, there is not one person here, who doubts that it is mortally hated by the grand League of despots who are earnestly intent on destroying these things from the earth;—or doubts, that, if it were an accessible place, a convenient part of the continent, we should before this day next year, receive some significations of the wish and the will of this League, that we should lay down these privileges; and on our refusal, half a million of armed ruffians would soon be in motion.

God be thanked for our insular situation! But, suppose that notwithstanding this, that dreadful League, become more consolidated in power and resources, were, in their elation, to adopt the determination to try. They send, suppose, an embassy to express their will. As men having human rights, we think it proper to refuse. But what then? for, as Christians, we judge it wrong and wicked to fight. Let this latter be known, and believed sincere, and the dictators may take the matter much at their ease; a very moderate martial equipment may suffice. It is, really, therefore, needless to put the stronger case, of an immense host of northern barbarians being landed on our coasts, (Tartars—Cossacks—Calmucks,) and joined there by the legions of the popish states. Unless, indeed, we should suppose a divided opinion in the nation, with respect to the Christian principle of the case; and that so, a very large and powerful proportion were resolute to resist in all the array and action of war. Now, while, with the utmost sacrifice and peril, they were doing so, and suppose successfully,—what a remarkable phenomenon would be presented! namely, the

other division of the people, deploring these very proceedings and successes, by which their houses are saved from ravage and desolation,—deploring them, as an awful outrage against Christian rectitude,—praying for an instant *conversion* of these deluded men to a right apprehension of Christian duty—that they might immediately throw away their arms, and allow the barbarian inundation to burst forward ;—or, having failed in this prayer, (and a mighty victory having finally cleared the land of the infernal irruption,) then, lamenting that a dreadful national violation of Christian principles had been irretrievably consummated! And, as success purchased by crime can, in the result, be little else than a calamity and a judgment, they might be alarmed and dismayed to find themselves still in possession of their former freedom of worship, of speech, and of action, and of all their rights as citizens.

The principle in question rests on the literal and extreme construction of a few expressions (such as “*Resist not evil.*” “*Give place to wrath.*” “*Love your enemies.*” “*To him that smiteth thee on one cheek, turn also the other.*”) Expressions which have an easy and applicable meaning in the general sense of interdicting revenge, retaliation, proud, prompt, and angry re-action ; while their unqualified literal interpretation (and that taken without any reference to the specific vocation of apostles and missionaries) plainly tends to *this* effect, namely, that Christianity should subject mankind universally to the unrestrained will of whoever is the most unjust and wicked : that so long as there are men who have more of Satan and Moloch in them than the rest, and are intent on practising oppression and cruelty, it is the absolute duty of Christians, as such, individually and nationally, to let them do it ;—at least rather than resist them in such a way as to endanger their persons. Now

this would be a most delightful doctrine to all the tyrants, bigots, *slave-drivers*, robbers, and murderers!

And so, while we are imagining that God approves good order and justice in human society, and requires that institutions be appointed to maintain and dispense justice and regulation, and protection,—all this while his last, best religion is in effect the patron of bold and remorseless iniquity. The case would be so, as long as the worst men are bold, ambitious, and insatiable; it *must*, unless we should expect the world's affairs to be administered by a perpetual miraculous interference; that is to say, administered on a principle the direct opposite to that which we see to be actually the Divine plan for human affairs, that is, a system of human means and agency. According to this system is the Divine appointment and sanction of magistracy and national government. The magistrate is not *so* to leave the matter to God's disposal as to refrain from using the "*sword*" against the doers of evil. And the government of a nation is but a magistracy on a larger scale.

We should apologize for having dwelt so much longer than was intended on this topic, instead of that most delightful one to which the prophecy points—*the cessation of war*. But in truth, whatever room we had, it were difficult to expatiate in particulars on that noble anticipation. There is a difference, in this case (of war), between history and prophecy. This history of the world's warfare, is broad, palpable, with prominent lines and features spread out in a vast array of actual events; the prophecy is one bright, general, idea without particulars. The only mode of illustrating and expanding it, is to conceive a full reversal of the character of the history. And that will spread a visionary scene before us, so new, and strange, and delightful, that

nothing but prophecy, and faith in the Divine power and goodness, could enable us to expect its realization. Think of a condition of the world, (and that world far more populous than now,) when there will be no tyrants,—no rapacious ambition,—no hostile rivalry,—no notion possessing the governors and chief men of the nations, that the people were made merely to subserve *their* passions and projects; no crafty, fallacious, hypocritical, representations to the people, to stimulate jealousy and hatred against other nations, in order to make them the willing instruments of violence; no restless vigilance and alarm respecting the designs of neighbouring states; no intelligence of suspicious appearances of preparation and armament; no negotiations of alliances, for either aggression or defence. Think of a condition of the world, when there will be no exhausting alienations from the rewards of peaceful industry, to maintain a mighty apparatus for destruction of both industry and man; no scenes where, in one day, on one small spot, more pain is inflicted than the sum of that which is suffered, perhaps, by the people of all Europe, in the ordinary course of things; when ten, or twenty, or forty thousand men are alive and well in the morning and dead at night,—gashed and bloody, and ready to be tossed indiscriminately into pits; no storming, sacking, burning of towns, or shattering and sinking of fleets; no aged parents, or wives and children, mourning the destroyed relatives, or sinking that mourning in terror for themselves; no devastation of all that peaceful toil has planted and built on the plains; no consumption of labour, art, science, and genius, in creating or applying the machinery of war. Think of the vast proportion of these (art, science, and genius,) hitherto so occupied, and of what will be the effect of so much applied to all peaceful and beneficial purposes, in addition to all besides that will be so employed. Think,

again, of all the quantity (if we may express it so,) of passion, of feeling, of strong emotion, that has gone towards, and gone into, war, directed to the promotion of public and private good. The stream of sentiment,—of strong interest,—of ardent feeling, in other words, the passion, the affection, which, during the last half century, has flowed into *that river of blood!*—think, if it had, instead, flowed through all the channels and streams of peaceful benevolence! Will there, in the better age, be less sentiment and passion so to flow?

And then, over all, through all, and as the cause of all,—the vital religion of Jesus Christ; his kingdom shall be, "*from shore to shore, and from the river to the ends of the earth.*" And be it always remembered, that it is in the progressive prevalence of his religion, as the supreme cause, that, alone, we can look for the advancement toward the state of universal and inviolable peace. It will, in going on, assume into its service and co-operation increasing knowledge, and all improvements in political science and institutions; but it is *itself alone*, the security that these shall be fully efficient for good. The enlarged promotion of *this*, therefore, we have to desire and implore above all things. And while we see its advancement but slow as yet, and behold the world under a sky menacing storms and thunders,—let our faith maintain a firm assurance that the Almighty will, at length, fulfil all his promises in universal Christianity and universal Peace.

November 5, 1823.

LECTURE XXXVIII.

THE CESSATION OF WAR, AN EFFECT OF THE PREVALENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

(PART II.)

ISAIAH ii. 4.

“They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

WE had no intention, last time, of resuming this text and subject. But, that discourse having been occupied wholly with images of *War*, it has been remarked that, to close *there* the considerations arising from such a text, appeared like a determination to dwell on nothing but the most gloomy side of a subject. We may, therefore, be excused in returning to it, for the purpose of directing the attention toward a more pleasing prospect.

But, it is obvious, in such a case, what an advantage history has over prophecy. The history is an immense, but crowded, exhibition of solid and prominent facts; while the prophecy is only one general, bright idea, not distinguished into particulars, not shaped into features. The state of *War* is spread out to our view, the width of the world, and the length of all time, filled with certain and unchangeable realities. We can just as much, in looking over a tract of country, avoid perceiving the hills, woods, towers, and villages, as, in surveying the world's wide history, we can fail to see the portentous forms of destruction. We behold

mighty desolating irruptions, battles, sieges, massacres, murders, and bloody persecutions on account of religion. And if some tracts of history have been overspread with an obscurity, till more recent, laborious researches have rendered them visible,—as the mist clears off, you are certain of what you shall see there first and foremost.

We do not here forget, how much there has been that was *not* hostility ; nor, that there is a prominence—a magnitude and glare, in martial transactions, by which they have obtained a disproportionate space in history ; while peaceful periods and scenes, with their agriculture, arts, commerce, civilization, and domestic quiet and kind affections, are contracted, in the historical view, to a diminutive compass, or wholly sunk out of sight. No :—but consider, that mankind *could* not be always fighting ; the utmost disposition for it, must, sometimes, yield to suspend the operation. Consider, how easily, by what slight causes, notwithstanding and amidst all those better things, men could be roused and fired for war ; that those very seasons of peace, with their improvements and growing wealth, have generally been regarded, expressly, as but a repose and reparation of strength for new war ; and that the favourite literature and amusements of such times have had very much a relation to war. And consider, too, what a collectiveness and concentration there is in war, of all human forces and means ; so that a given measure (so to speak) of war is tantamount to a vastly greater *apparent* measure of peaceful life and action. All proportion is distanced and lost ; set its quantity of ardent exertion and of danger in proportion against, what quantity of action and hazard in peaceful life ? or its expenditure of wealth,—its number of deaths. So that war, as a part of the state of mankind, is equal to a prodigiously greater nominal proportion of the peaceful state. Therefore, though history *has* given an

undue distinction and proportion to war, yet, it would be no rightly proportioned history that did not give a great prominence to this portion of what has been done by men. It is right, therefore, that a very large portion of the great field of history should be seen overspread with this direful appearance.

Such is the History. The delightful Prophecy presents a scene of which no part is so occupied. But it is difficult to realize the fact to our imagination. No fighting on the face of the whole earth! no armies, nor military profession, nor garrisons, nor arms, nor banners, nor proclamations! No leagues, offensive or defensive;—no guarding of frontiers;—no fortresses;—no military prisons! No celebrating of victories, in gaudy pomps and revelries for the vulgar, or in prostituted poetry for the more refined! A wondering what kind of times those could be, in which mankind accounted it the highest glory to kill one another! Truly this is a state of things we are ill prepared even to conceive.

And, again, is it not difficult to conceive the practicability of its attainment? For, it is something intrinsic in man, in the soul and nature of man, throughout the whole race, that war has sprung from. *There* is the brimstone,—the gunpowder,—the forge; there is the hot and terrible element, that has burst abroad in so many thunders,—that has attracted infernal spirits to combine in its fires. And yet it is *Man* that is to be universally at peace! How can it be? We feel somewhat like the unbelieving lord,—“*if the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be.*” Take mankind, collectively, such as it has been, in any age, or is now; with all the dispositions, existing as they were, and are. Now, with all these dispositions in full prevalence, conceive, notwithstanding, the whole world kept actually in perfect peace for a century, in nations and every minor community. Would not this be the most astonishing of all

miracles? Would not this be a direct, immediate coercion of almighty Power, permanently suspending or reversing a grand law of moral nature? But a time is to come, when, without any such miraculous coercion, *Man* will be in universal peace! For no one can suppose that this universal peace will be effected and maintained by such direct coercion. But then, think what there must not be in men, when there shall "*no more*" be war amongst them! Vicious selfishness, ambition, envy, rivalry, rapacity, revenge,—these are the things in men that cause wars between them, on the small scale and on the great. And how can these ever be so repressed, subdued, extirpated, that all war shall cease?

Men indifferent or hostile to Religion have been of different opinions on the subject. There may indeed have been some wicked theorizers, who have even asserted that religion itself must be extirpated before war can be; alleging how very often something which they choose to call Religion, has been itself the cause of wars, and has exasperated their cruelty,—meaning that execrable compound of superstition and state policy which really has been such a cause. This they have chosen to name Religion; either, if that be possible, in stupid ignorance, knowing no better; or, in spite of their own better knowledge, and presuming on the ignorance of others. Some irreligious speculators, indeed, have avowed a disbelief that war will or can from any cause ever cease in the world; alleging all experience and the radical dispositions of Man, which dispositions they ridicule the notion and hope that anything can ever effectually alter. But there have been other irreligious speculatists (self-called philosophers), very sanguine in their predictions of the abolition of war, ultimately. "It cannot be (they have said), that mankind will always continue so mad as to seek and expect their pleasure,

advantage, and glory, in destroying and being destroyed. Progressive experience and knowledge will at length avail, both to mitigate the bad passions, and to establish in general conviction better and wiser *principles of self-interest*. A more free and extensive intercourse will contribute to conciliate the nations,—will eradicate their inveterate prejudices and animosities,—and introduce a more liberal policy. They will become, on all sides, *wiser calculators*, and consider what it costs to settle their differences by means of war. Increase of literature and enlightened speculation, in the higher classes, will make them feel the coarseness and barbarism of the passion for war. Progressive civilization in the inferior classes, will attach them to those advantages, and enjoyments of comfort, commodiousness, and competence, on which war makes such ravages. And at length, too few men for the business of war will be found willing to abandon these satisfactions to go into such an employment.” And all this, observe, *independently of religion*.

Now, we would give their due to all things of such an order. Such things will be *included*, certainly, in whatever process can and shall reduce the world at length to peace; they will be taken as accessaries and subsidiaries to the Master Power in the operation. But, whoever would reckon on such things alone, should be strangely mortified, one thinks, in adverting to many facts of old and recent history. What, for example, is he to do with the History of Greece? or of the Italian Republics? Or nearer home; Britain and France account themselves the most enlightened, improved, civilized states in the world. And have they not been, with all their might, fighting and slaying each other and neighbouring nations, for centuries almost without intermission, down to this time? In the French Revolutionary government, which, after a time,

became essentially warlike, there were more philosophers, speculatists, literary men, than ever in any other. In our own country, through the last half century, the enlightened and civilized people (often so described and lauded at least) have needed but a little excitement, at any time, to rush out into war. Our institutions of learning and even theology have constantly abetted the spirit. And an ever-flowing impetuous stream there has been, of oratory, poetry, and even pulpit-declamation, mingling with, and inspiring, the coarser torrent of the popular zeal for battles and victories. We have had both poets and divines actually sending the most immoral heroes to heaven, on the mere strength of their falling in patriotic combat. All this tells but ill for the efficacy of civilization, literature, refinement, and the instruction of experience to promote the spirit of peace,—without the predominance of some mightier course. And how obvious it is, that all these, regarded as principal causes, must be inefficacious. For all causes must be so, that do not include, as the chief principle, the fear of God. In the very nature of things, it cannot be, that any race of intelligent creatures within the Divine dominion can be ordered right, without regard to Him as the Governor. Without this, there can be no peremptory authority to enforce the rules of righteousness, of equity, on men's minds. Without this, the maxims of a corrupt policy, the fashion of the age, the seduction of brilliant example, will be sure to have the sway. Men will never generally be just to one another, but under the sense of the presence of the God of justice.

Again, nothing will operate efficaciously to this grand effect, that does not go deep into the constitution of men's souls, and change their temper; so as to quell, internally, those fatal passions, which have perpetuated external war. And that is what cannot be done by any civilization, national refinement, science, or even an enlightened theo-

retical policy. All these may be but like fair structures and gardens, extended over a ground where volcanic fires are in a temporary slumber below. All these may be shattered and exploded by some mighty impulse of ambition, or some blast of revengeful anger. These exterior improvements may leave those passions in full existence there;—and if they be existing, they will prove it is not for nothing. No polish, cultivation, or intelligence in a nation, would be any security against its being possessed by a spirit of *haughty and imperious pride*, which would impel it to resent and revenge some insult, at whatever cost of blood and destruction;—or any security against *ambition*, when tempted by some opportune juncture for making a splendid conquest;—or against a nation's running mad for martial glory, at the will and under the direction of some great national champion;—or against the pernicious delusion of an extravagant Patriotism. No; there must be a greater nobler power brought into prevalence among mankind, and that is plainly CHRISTIANITY. It is in no other way, assuredly, that prophecy gives the pledge for the realization of our hope on this subject. And on any other ground, we should agree with those speculators who scorn the notion of mankind being ever estranged from war. Nothing springing merely from the action of the human mind can suffice. It must be something coming from Heaven. And *this* is the appointed and qualified agent.

The bright day, however, of its general efficacy, is yonder in futurity; perhaps far off. Yet, it has accomplished something in this direction already. We dare not assert, even, that it may not have prevented some wars. And its advocates have often observed, that to *it* is mainly attributable the mitigation of ferocity and exterminating rage, so evident in modern wars in these countries. And, look at its genuine tendency, as displayed on the smaller scale,

in a family,—a neighbourhood,—a district. Who has not heard some instance of a family, in a wretched constant state of hostility within itself; but at length one, and then another, of the members of it, have been converted by the religion of Jesus Christ. The consequence how happy! But, partly within our knowledge, and our memory, there have been whole districts of our country wonderfully altered by this same agent; especially in Lancashire and Cornwall. And it is pleasing to observe,—where a considerable number are thus happily changed, there is a great external and preventive effect wrought on the general body of the community, in such a place; so that all the direct efficacy of religion has also an indirect one.

Now, imagine this double effect of religion extended throughout a nation; say, a powerful one, like this. And what will the natural consequence be, in respect to war? Will it not be,—a comparative coldness toward that pernicious phantasm of martial "*glory*;"—a loathing of that sort of eloquence and poetry that are making a god of it;—a hatred of the very name of ambitious conquerors;—horror at the image of vast masses of men meeting to destroy one another;—reflection, how unprepared most of them are to go into eternity;—compassion, by anticipation, toward deprived and mourning relatives;—a sense of the flagrant absurdity, as well as iniquity, of avenging some little wrong at the cost of so mighty a portion and variety of misery;—a revolting, on an economical account, at the idea of such a waste and destruction of the means of the community;—and a faith that Providence has not so abandoned the world, that we are not to wait one moment, for any interposition from it in favour of justice, but, the instant the scales of justice are poised, we must throw in the sword. Such would be the spirit and temper of a nation predominantly Christian.

But, it may be said,—such a nation might nevertheless have a government fierce for war, and that would force the nation into it. We hardly believe that such a nation would have such a government; for, as wicked governments are given as the scourge and just plague of irreligious and wicked nations; we think the Supreme Righteous Governor would not let such an evil be on such a people. But supposing its government were of such a temper, it surely would not, unless lost to all prudence, (and then it would soon destroy itself,) it would not rush into war, under the decided general disapprobation of such a people.

Now, we have only to imagine the same progress of pure, vital Christianity in several nations, and then *they* are most certainly at peace. And supposing several great nations brought to this state, think what a mighty and preponderating influence they, combined, would have over the other nations, in which Christianity had as yet gained far less ground. *They* might form an alliance most truly “*holy*” for the exertion of such influence. We may be very sure that their interposed mediation to prevent wars among the other nations would be of prodigious weight; by,—for one thing, their lofty character, and unquestionably upright intentions; or next, if that influence failed, by the awe of the power, of another kind, which such unexhausted nations would possess. For we are supposing them to keep in armories and arsenals for some time those implements which are, ultimately, to take the shape of ploughshares and pruning-hooks.

We may extend our imagination of this grand process over the whole earth. And, (as we said in the former discourse,) if we believe in the future extension of the knowledge and vital power of the religion of Christ over it all,—we necessarily conceive this progressive abolition of war. Every extension, then, of this blessed

religion is so much gained against war; quenching still another, and another, spark of an infernal fire;—repressing in some more minds, those evil passions which are the prompters and the essential power of war. It is a most auspicious sign, therefore, that in this very age of hostile commotion, there is arising a new and most extraordinary activity for promoting Christianity. And we think this zeal bears a marked characteristic of being of Divine origination, in the circumstance of its being animated with so much energy and confident hope, in spite of such a world of gloomy facts and omens. Because it holds by the strength of Divine declarations, it dares to be confident against an infinity of what is adverse; herein differing from the mere ordinary spirit of mere human projects. Is not this a presage something like that accompanying the birth of Samson? This newly risen zeal for Christianity is the infant Samson, growing up against a world of the Philistines of war, and not, like him, to perish itself in its victories.

We may sometimes indulge our imagination on the future scene of *Universal Peace*,—the grand reversal of what the earth has been hitherto. No more the spectacle—of tracts devastated with fire and sword,—of besieged towns dilapidated and burning over their famished and dying inhabitants,—or stormed, and their streets running with blood; or,—of a vast assemblage of men arrayed and confronted in two hosts; in the morning in health and vigour, in the evening twenty or thirty thousand of them dead and dying, in every frightful form of laceration and mutilation, in all modes and degrees of anguish,—besides all that is in their souls during the day, and at the end,—and great ditches and pits for them to be thrown into in the mass. No more, the wealth, or perhaps the poverty, of a nation, and the ingenuity and labours of myriads of its

people, put in requisition in preparing the apparatus for destruction. All that will remain of war will be its monumental relics and its records,—the subjects of how many musings,—partly mournful, but soon turning to delightful felicitation, and gratitude to the Almighty.

But we are not to regard the scene in a merely negative view, that there will not be war; for, when there is not war, what will there be? what? when the numbers of mankind are greater, and far more cultivated and intelligent, when the resources are more abundant, when the time, and faculties, and labours are no longer so perverted? Think, a moment of but this last part of the account. Think what would be effected by so much wealth, time, labour, art, ingenuity, directed to the noblest purposes of peace. Contemplate, especially, the happiest view of the subject. That there will be no war, will be because the religion of Christ will prevail, in the souls, life, and activities of men,—in the individuals and communities, small and great. And prevailing Christianity, what will that cause men to do, in this universal vacation from war? Besides their ordinary necessary labours (the work of the "*ploughshare*," and all the implements of peaceful industry), think of the religious employments, the intellectual pursuits, the exercises of charity, which there will be in such a race, in such a time!

But, we can surmise that here some aspiring, ardent spirit might say, doubtfully—"Would there, in such a state of mankind, be excitement enough for a strong and lofty spirit? any scope and occasion for noble enterprise?" Think of the perversion of human sentiment! that exploits of war should have come to be deemed necessary in order that strong and ardent minds may have an adequate employment! But we have to answer, that there will at all events remain, then, one illustrious line of enterprise.

“And what can that be?” Answer, no less than the enterprise of “*taking by violence the Kingdom of Heaven.*” Will not that be something worthy of the most ardent spirit, something equal to the highest aspiring of ambition? But perhaps our high-spirited questioner pauses at this, and feels something of a damp and a disappointment. And, perhaps, if he spoke, would say—“*That* does not suit the temper of my ambition.” Perhaps not, indeed;—but we have to tell him, that it will suit the ambition of the men of that future period, for, then, the religion of Christ will actuate their passions.

But, subordinately to this as the grand object of zealous ambition, it were easy, if we had time, to represent on that pacific field, many modes of exertion quite adequate to the highest tone of enterprise; always keeping in mind that the very taste and inclination for destructive enterprise will be annihilated.

Will it be impertinent just to name a kind of objection, of a sceptical cast, from the quarter of our Economists,—that under such a system, the inhabitants of the world would be too numerous, after a course of ages, for it to support? There is a most violent and wilful excess in their mode of calculation. But, with this exception, we mention this opinion to admit it. But the matter of exceeding wonder is, that none of these speculators (the able leader of them being himself of the sacred profession) should ever seem to recollect that revelation has spoken of such a thing as *the end of the world!* Nothing can be more easy to conceive, than that the period of that end of all things may be appointed to coincide with the term when population has reached the utmost limit of the earth’s capacity to sustain it.

Lastly, as an admonition to individuals, professing Christianity—let them consider, whether they are now of a

disposition congenial to such a state of peace, that is, is there in them an effectual repression of that which is the spirit of war? the selfishness,—pride,—arrogance,—envy,—revenge? If not, they are essentially of the *war tribe*, however little they have to do with actual war; however much they may condemn and profess to deplore it. It is just from a prevalence of such principles in communities that they go to mortal war. And such individuals are not fit for that future terrestrial "*kingdom of heaven*."

November 20, 1823.

LECTURE XXXIX.

THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF DANIEL.

DANIEL vi. 28.

“So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.”

It is probable that few parts of the sacred history and biography have been read with a more pleasing interest than the account of Daniel. It might not, then, be unacceptable to make a brief survey of what is recorded of him, with such reflections as may arise from the facts.

He was one of the young men of the higher rank (himself generally believed to be of the royal kindred) who were carried to Babylon in the great captivity; and there, with three others of them, he was selected, on account of conspicuous personal and mental qualifications, to be, after due training, introduced into the service of the Court; a very hazardous thing for young men; but here, for once, the pestilent influence struck on incorruptible materials. On hearing of any young man (of talents especially) advancing in the world—rising to distinction and station, the first point one would be glad to be assured of is, that he has a conscience, a true and faithful one. For we know full well that, if he have not, every step of his advancement will be but a curse to him. Here, in the instance of Daniel, we have the right man. The first movement for his promotion found his conscience, and found it of a firm and sound consistence. The question was, of his living on the appointed portion of the king's provisions. This might seem no such

very considerable matter, to be made an insurmountable obstacle at the very entrance of a prosperous career. With an ordinary man, how many persuasive pleas and extenuations would have come in to help him over it! But conscience cannot well begin the exercise of its jurisdiction at matters too small. When comparatively small matters of conscience can easily be disposed of, in favour of inclination and worldly interest, it is a very unpromising sign for the conduct in greater ones. It is true that sometimes, (indeed very commonly among the superstitious) men have made much of little things, in order to obtain a kind of licence to make little of great ones. It was notoriously so among the Jews in our Lord's time. But Daniel was not one of those, who while "*straining at a gnat*" can "*swallow a camel*." He carried his conscience throughout,—as the one thing he was not to forfeit, whatever else he should forego, or incur.

It is happy when such a man has friends that are like him. Daniel had three that were worthy of him; though it may be, that the influence of his high and ascendent character, contributed very much to make them so. He found that he should be faithfully seconded in his fidelity to God; that there were men prepared to go all lengths and hazards with him; to cast in their lot with him, for better and for worse,—for life and for death. And see how the principle of their friendship, their generous compact, was illustrated (at a period further on in the history), namely, they were all such as would combine their prayers to the Almighty for his benediction on their associated state and conduct. And let youthful friends be admonished to make that a grand point in their preference for companionship.

They refused the royal indulgence, though the grant and appointment of it involved something of the nature of a command; and limited themselves to the humble fare of the most austere and self-mortifying hermit; and that, too,

through the whole space of three years, that is, the anticipated space; for the term was in fact shortened by events. Yet they flourished the more, and did not incur the evil which the friendly officer, who had the charge of them, apprehended. No man shall, ultimately at least, be a loser by any sacrifice and self-denial conscientiously rendered to God. He will graciously receive the tribute, and he can compensate the sacrifice, in any one or in several, of an unknown variety of ways. To these admirable young men it was done in these two ways at once;—they were in personal condition no worse, but the contrary, for what any young men of such quality might have regarded as a rigorous penance,—and, the resentment to be feared from their monarch and conqueror was entirely prevented. And a much worse thing was precluded, that is, the subsequent condemnation or insensibility of their own consciences.

“*When a man’s ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.*” Daniel, increasing in wisdom and virtue, we see in high favour with the conqueror’s officer of state! and soon to appear in a very high and solemn capacity before that imperial personage himself. The king had had in his dreams what he retained an impression of as a portentous vision, but could not recall it. The summons was issued to the “*wise men*” of Babylon, with the dreadful menace, “*if ye will not make known unto me the dream and the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill,*” (ii. 5.) This may seem like the unreasonable and extravagant demand of a tyrant; but in effect it was not, perhaps, so grossly unjust. Those that would set up themselves as having an intelligence far beyond the sphere of mere human knowledge, had perhaps little right to make, at their will, selections and exceptions as to the cases to which their superhuman knowledge should be required to be competent.

They tell the king, indeed, that none but "*the gods*" are competent to the case; but, unless they were in intimate communication with "*the gods*," what business had they to make such pretensions as they did, which were no less than to give infallible predictions of *future* events? *Thus much* (which they pretended to) they must have obtained from "*the gods*," for it would be idle and impious to assume to have such illumination from any other quarter. And it was but a *less* thing, that a *past* circumstance should be revealed to them by these divinities. But no god intervened in this extremity. The "*wise men*" pleaded, and even remonstrated in vain; they were reduced to silence and confusion. The king might justly have told them that they ought to have been honest enough *before* such a trial to acknowledge and make known such a capricious limitation of their supernatural faculty.

In his disappointment and anger, he sent forth a decree for the destruction of "*all the wise men of Babylon*." And it seems the qualification of "*wise*" was become a known character of Daniel and his three friends; and therefore they were obnoxious to the decree. But they had a resource which the other wise men had not; they had access to Omniscience itself. And Daniel, brought before the king, requested and obtained time to converse with a Being that the king and his "*wise men*" did not know; avowing his perfect confidence that a heavenly light would fall upon his spirit. We may observe, that in those great emergencies where such a direction is required as is evidently beyond the competence of human judgment, a good man should trust to the *immediate* signification, or interposition, of the Divine Spirit. Cases strictly answering to this description are not perhaps of frequent occurrence. Yet there have been not a few such situations in the infinitely various experience of the servants of God, especially in troubled and

perilous times;—conjunctures of circumstances in which it was purely impossible to determine by human judgment; *then* might be implored a *direct* intimation from the Supreme Wisdom; and unquestionably it has been granted. To Daniel it was granted in the most illustrious form of inspiration. Here was a signal occasion for God to make manifest the difference between the wisdom and powers imparted to his prophets, and all the pretended supernatural endowments that deluded a superstitious people. And there were many remarkable occasions on which this vindicating and triumphant contrast was exhibited; so that God “*left not himself without witness,*” and the heathens and their deceivers were “*left without excuse.*”

Daniel appears with serene dignity before the monarch; with the lost vision painted luminously by the Divine Spirit on his imagination; and with an intelligence as luminously expanding forward into futurity; and, very probably, with somewhat of supernatural expression in his countenance. Is there not something delightful in seeing and thinking, to what an elevation it has been shown possible for mortals to be raised through communication with the greatest Being? How much sublimer here appears the prophet than the mighty monarch! indeed, in the monarch's own estimation; for, after the dream and the interpretation were declared, “*the king fell down on his face and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours to him,*” (ii. 46.) The better thing was, that he testified an awful veneration of the God that could impart such inspirations. Immediately after this, he raised Daniel to the highest station in the administration of his government, and promoted his three friends to high offices.

But, after a while, this prophet and devout statesman was to witness how transient may be the impression of the most striking and even convincing manifestations from Heaven.

For, there comes next the account of the golden idol, "*set up in the plain of Dura.*" This *would* seem passing strange. To have been brought as into the presence and glory of the God of Daniel,—to have had acknowledged evidence of his superiority over all that was previously known of Divinity,—and then to make a lifeless image of metal to be adored! Perhaps every reader is struck with it as a fact approaching to monstrous. But, in truth, this is but a more palpable and aggravated specimen of an absurdity, still very common among men, in more enlightened times and regions. They believe,—they acknowledge the God of heaven, and ascribe to him all that is glorious;—and then!—they set up their idols, each one for himself to worship; not indeed, avowedly as gods, to receive, expressly, Divine honours, but virtually adored;—to be the objects of chief interest,—deepest, warmest attachment,—dependence for happiness,—to be earnestly laboured for,—lived for,—even died for, in a melancholy and thankless martyrdom. Happy, if these idolaters could be as soon and effectually convinced of the vanity of what they adore, as Nebuchadnezzar was with respect to his golden image!

We shall not expatiate on the scene of Dura, every way magnificent and memorable, and, of itself, affording a subject ample enough for prolonged contemplation. Daniel, in some way not explained, appears to have stood exempt from the trial that awaited his three noble friends. He would feel profoundly interested in their conduct on so grand an occasion. But his anticipations of them, and for them, would be confident, and even elevated and felicitous. We can imagine his intercourse with them, relative to the subject, previously to the appointed day and hour. And the converse of such men, in such a predicament, may be believed to have surpassed all that poets have feigned, in pathos, in solemnity, in adjuration to fidelity to God, in

affectionate vows, in heroic piety. He would see them to their position, between the idol and the fiery furnace. He might then retire, to present them before his God and theirs; from which employment he was, ere long, to be called, to meet them again with the most delightful congratulations that ever sprung from the sublimest emotions.

The next part of the history is given by Nebuchadnezzar himself (ch. iv.), in a long proclamation to the people of his dominions. He describes a mysterious dream (that of the great Tree), which had filled him with apprehension. He honestly relates that he had (very strange as such a proceeding was) once more sent for the vain pretenders to hidden wisdom, whose tribe had escaped destruction through the favour of God towards Daniel and his friends (as often the wicked, in this world, are spared on account of the righteous). And once more Daniel was proved to be the only oracle of the Divine Intelligence. The interpretation was followed, a year afterwards, by the accomplishment.

Nebuchadnezzar, on recovering his reason, certainly made an excellent use of it, in this very noble proclamation; in which he explicitly records his own self-idolizing pride, and the ignominious condition to which he was justly abased, on account of it, by a Divine judgment. And he closes with the most elevated sentiments in honour of the Divine majesty and justice, with an unaffected dignity and energy of expression. A striking contrast to all the hypocritical cant and pompous formality. Nothing like it, or comparable to it, was ever sent forth by any monarch.

We are left to conclude that, soon after this, he retired from his palace to his tomb. Daniel would lament his death; for with the great capacity for good, there did at last seem combined the right disposition toward it. No potentate ever had such a mourner. His grandson Belshazzar followed him in the empire; and was destined to

perish in its fall. His life, (except its very last scene,) appeared not worth recording; for one chief reason, because the great friend and minister of his predecessor had little to do with the course of it. The closing spectacle may speak for the whole character of his reign;—feasting and revelry—libertine profligacy—vain pomp—insolent contempt of anything connected with the name of the true God—and an utter estrangement from the best and wisest of his subjects.

We can easily imagine what was likely to be the condition, as to morals and everything else, of an empire under such a head. And what an exemplification it was of what was spoken by the voice in Nebuchadnezzar's vision, that the Most High sometimes "*setteth over the kingdom the basest of men!*"

The luxurious banqueting was *timed* very characteristically of the chief reveller and his court; for, at that time the empire was formidably invaded, and the city was actually besieged by Cyrus, after he had, as history mentions, utterly defeated Belshazzar in battle. "*They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone,*" (v. 4.) But festivity and idolatry were not enough, in this most perilous juncture of the kingdom, without some special insult to the God of Israel; and the vessels of his temple at Jerusalem were ordered to be brought for these bacchanalian libations. It looks like judicial infatuation when, in circumstances of peculiar danger impending, a direct insult is offered to the Divine Majesty.

But now imagine this jovial assemblage, of the royalty and nobility of Babylon. They had met, expecting nothing but luxury and conviviality there. But something else, something besides, was to come! But would they not be sufficiently fortified against whatever that might be? No;

it proved otherwise; for four words written by a shadowy hand on the wall, put all their mirth and spirit to flight. The words of the Almighty can be made to throw out, when he wills, an overpowering energy. This company could revel in exuberant gaiety, with the legions of a victorious besieging army around their city; but *the four words!* that was an irresistible assault on the elation of their hilarity! that threw as it were "*the shadow of death*" over their joyous and brilliant assembly!

An instant summons was issued to the astrologers and soothsayers, and once more their intervention was in vain. We see in what profound obscurity Daniel must have been, in this reign; for the king did not recollect any such person. The queen, his mother probably, came to inform him of such a man, and of the important capacity in which he had stood in relation to the former monarch. When, at her advice, Daniel was introduced, the king actually asked him, "*Art thou that Daniel whom the king my father brought out of Jewry?*" He had had his counsellors, and ministers, and favourites, and priests, and poets, and seers; but his inquiries and notice had never fallen on such a man as Daniel!

For an interpretation of the portentous words, splendid rewards and appointments were offered, which a few hours hence were not to be his to give, and for which the prophet expressed the utmost indifference. The prophet made to him, first, a solemn representation of his careless and wicked life, and of his final act of profaneness against the God whom he ought to have known Almighty; and then interpreted. There was no space for repentance; for "*that night was the king of the Chaldeans slain,*" and the city taken. The manner of its being taken by Cyrus the Mede, who was to be king of Persia, is familiar to those who have read illustrations of the Sacred History.

Daniel might now indulge his solemn meditations over the memories and the tombs of departed monarchs, whom he had beheld in all the plenitude of imperial splendour and pride. They were now but dust and a name; left among the memorials of an empire also departed. But, *his* great Master still lived! unchangeable in glory and goodness; and he remained unchangeably devoted to him, all the same, whatever became of mortal potentates and empires. He wanted no patron; the smiles, or frowns of monarchs were indifferent to him. He was in favour with the Highest Power,—insomuch that he was addressed by an angelic messenger with the unequalled appellation, “*O man greatly beloved!*” To a man who had heard *that*, think how any title of worldly dignity, of mortal favour, would have sounded! We can conceive of him, more even than of many other of the prophets, that the general habitual state of his mind, was of an elevation, in thought and devotion, peculiarly adapted to receive the special illapses of inspiration,—that (if we might express it so) heavenly visits had not to descend so entirely to the earth to reach him. These communications from on high he probably enjoyed often. Several of his prophetic visions, fore-showing a distant futurity, are related in his book, occupying indeed the larger part of it; especially some sublime representations of the Messiah and his kingdom. These carry us away from the immediate view of the man; but there remains to be noticed one part of his personal history, perhaps the most illustrious of all.

Darius, the Mede, by the appointment of Cyrus, succeeded Belshazzar in the kingdom, now become but an appendage to the Persian empire. In some way or other, the foreigner placed on the throne had become apprised of the value of the illustrious captive, and placed him at once in the very highest station. It was verily worth that the

country should be conquered—that *any* country should—if the consequence might be that the most eminent wisdom, virtue, piety on earth, should be set over it. The prophet cared nothing about the *legitimacy* of the reigning chiefs,—they were all alike to him. Indeed, the best proof of the monarch's *right* was his being disposed to choose the most tried and illustrious virtue and wisdom in his dominions, to be raised to the supreme authority in their affairs. It was a bright day for Babylon when Daniel was thus appointed. He, this one great statesman, was not ambitious, for he would flatter no monarch to obtain his favours; and he would not keep them at the expense of one slightest violation of his fidelity to the King of Heaven. Indeed, we may be assured that his very acceptance of such honours and cares was simply and solely in obedience to the Highest Authority.

It was certain enough that his fidelity, his conscience, would not remain long exempt from an effectual trial. So must every good man expect, who is to have much to do with the world. It was resolved to *ruin* him, as the phrase is—a phrase at which he would have smiled. But it was not to be avowed that this was to be on account of his *superlative virtue*; and, unfortunately, his conspiring enemies could find no other crime. Then they must make a new kind of crime; and one really would have liked to know whether they thought he would not dare to commit it. But, indeed, it does seem likely that they expected he would so dare, as they could venture to put all on this hazard. What a testimony to his principles! They were quite right in judging that the proper way of beginning, was to flatter the monarch's pride and self-importance. And they must well have known their man, to have ventured, even on the strength of all the eastern extravagance of adulation to royalty, to make such a proposal,—a decree that, for an

entire month, no man should make prayer or petition to God or man, save to Darius, on pain of being cast into the den of lions ;—that *he* should take declared precedence of all on earth and in heaven !

If there should be an excessive drought or rain, not a word of supplication to any Immortal Power controlling the elements ; if a pestilence, not one petitionary sacrifice for abating it ; if a man were sick he must not request a physician to visit him ; if fallen into a pit, not call out for assistance ; if his house were on fire, not entreat his neighbours to help to put it out ; if famishing, not ask for a morsel of bread ; if a man had offended or injured his brother, he must not ask him to forgive ; if the gods (as he, a heathen, might easily surmise) should be angry at this suspension of their worship, they were not even to be entreated to have patience till the king's time was up !

The poor mortal, however, was caught on the side of his foolish and impious self-importance. He signed the irreversible decree ; and all followed just as was desired. It is not unlikely, however, that these virtuous courtiers had made all possible preparation of spies on Daniel. They suspected he would pray ; but might think he would take some precaution to conceal so dangerous a fact. But all prying vigilance was superfluous ; for he, "*as aforetime*," and with his windows unclosed, uncurtained, "*prayed and gave thanks before his God three times a-day*." A striking admonition against subterfuges in duty and religion ; against contrivances at once to quiet conscience, and preserve an immediate self-interest. Especially, in every trial of religious integrity which is to be conspicuously public, under the observant attention of men, to seem to forego a principle, is to do it in fact.

The great point appeared now to be gained ; for the king himself was as much in the power of these bad men as

Daniel was. He struggled earnestly, but too late, and in vain; and Daniel went to the den. Very strange would appear the readiness, the tranquillity, the serenity, with which he would be seen to go thither. We cannot know whether he had any Divine intimation that he had no enemies to apprehend in that dreadful receptacle. But his resolution, and even his calmness, would not depend on whether he had or not. He was soon in the midst of his appointed companions. If it was night, or evening, as it appears to have been, his sight would meet, on every side, that direful lustre which appears in the eyes of these formidable animals; but to him they were as the lamps of heaven, or a reflection of a Divine presence there; a far more pleasing light than those brilliant ones which were in the same hour burning in the splendid apartments of the malignant, and now rejoicing lords, who had accomplished his doom; or in the palace of the great king, who was sad and horror-struck at having sealed it. We can even imagine these terrible beasts showing, for their first and last time, a bland and caressing character,—such as may be supposed when the first of their race passed before Adam in Paradise, and did a kind of homage to the human lord of the world.

But the angel of the Lord, too, was there; perhaps visibly; or perhaps perceived only in the miraculous influence which controlled and suspended the fierce temperament of the inhabitants of the den. However it were, Daniel had no impatience to leave his abode and society. He might perform his devotions there, with more than even his accustomed elevation of piety, and with no malignant eyes of his enemies upon him. And in the morning, he could answer the king, calling to him with “*a lamentable voice*,” that this fearful night—as all would have imagined it—had been to him, as the tranquillity and felicities of heaven.

Such honours have been conferred on exalted piety. And who, then, would not wish to be a devoted servant of the Almighty?

December 10, 1823.

LECTURE XL.*

THE THREE JEWS IN BABYLON.

DANIEL iii.

“Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits : he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon,” &c.

IN our last exercise of this kind, we attempted a brief review of the life and character of the Prophet Daniel ; but not dwelling at all on this splendid secondary narrative of his three friends ; nor yet, at that time intending to make it the future subject of more extended observation.

But we do not know that we can much better employ an hour of our time than in the contemplation of such a spectacle.

For, as to any selected topic being peculiarly appropriate to this particular season or day, we may presume that scarcely any one here can regard that notion in any other light than as a relic of superstition and ecclesiastical imposition. Even if this day were certainly known to be the

* “You ask whether the end was better than the beginning ! If simply the last discourse be the point of the question, I think I may answer in the affirmative. I had a splendid subject—the three Methodists of Babylon in the fiery furnace ; and perhaps I thought, and *perhaps* some of the auditors thought, that I did it tolerable justice. This was no appropriate Christmas subject ; but I began by briefly ‘showing cause’ why no special regard was due to the day.”—*Mr. Foster to the Rev. Josiah Hill, Jan. 26, 1824. Life and Correspondence, &c., vol. i. p. 411.*

true anniversary of our Lord's coming to the earth, that would not be a competent reason for attributing to it a special sanctity—unless there were some dictate of the Divine will as the authority for doing so. But the fact is, there is no ascertaining of the day or anything near it. Even the Evangelists seem not to have known it. One of them says, Jesus Christ was "*about*" such an age. The whole matter therefore is but an arbitrary institute of superstition; that same superstition which, in numberless other instances, has not only connected a fanciful and false importance with particular facts, but also falsely asserted, or feigned, the facts themselves. (Thus, relics of the saints and martyrs, pieces of the cross, &c.)

All days are just equally proper, (all in which men can have the freedom and command of their thoughts,) for grateful remembrances of the advent of our Lord.

And also, any portion of our time and thought that is free, may be well employed in contemplating a striking example of fidelity to God. This before us is a very bright and memorable one. It is true, it is a brightness surrounded by gloom, and the more splendid by that contrast.

It is truly a sad and awful spectacle,—to behold a great monarch, and the personages representing the population of a great empire, with perhaps a numerous throng of the common people, assembled for such a purpose. Consider what man should be on earth! Reflect, that the right state would have been, that all mankind should be intelligent and solemn worshippers of the true God, of him alone; the merely right state, below which, the scene becomes a spectacle of horror and misery,—for the vital principle of all good is wanting.

Think, then, of that great empire, that prodigious multitude of human spirits (and nearly all the rest of mankind being sunk equally low) ready to prostrate themselves in

adoration of a figure of metal, from the hands of the artificers. Look at them, in such prostrations, all over the world, and say, *that man is not fallen!* Between that state, and the simply, merely, right state, how awful the difference! What intelligence must that be, that could measure the stupendous distance!

In the incalculable human mass, of a whole idolatrous world, we are shown here and there an individual or a diminutive combination of individuals, little shining particles, specimens of what the right state of the whole would have been. But if they were specimens of no more than what was right—then, what power of thought can estimate,—what language describe—that condition of the general substance, from which they shine out in contrast? The right state of the Sun, is to be one full orb of radiance;—that, though there be some small spots and dimmer points, it should be in effect a complete and glorious luminary. Imagine, then, if you can, this effulgence extinguished, and turned to blackness, over all its glorious face, excepting here and there a most diminutive point, emitting one bright ray like a small star. What a ghastly phenomenon! and if it continued so, the utter ruin of the system.

But such, in the history before us, we behold the condition of the human race,—of which that empire was so large a province. We behold three men true and faithful in the grand essential principle, among the innumerable host that were sunk, debased, and lost, as to that which is the supremely essential matter to man. In other pagan lands, however, in the same age, there was not *one* such. In Babylon, a few.

Observe; it is quite in the nature of things that prevailing evil should be ambitious to prevail *entirely*; should strive to overpower, and absorb the little good that stands out, in distinction and opposition. And here it was to be

brought to the trial, whether any would dare refuse to be idolaters, in conformity to the whole great assemblage.

The history of the design, on the part of the monarch, would be curious, if we could know it. How he should conceive such a project. Were there not gods enough in his city and empire, for all the worship and offerings, for which the people could spare time and cost? And did it not obviously threaten great confusion in the notions, and appointed services, of the established religion, thus to force in *another* deity, with all his new demands and ritual? a new article in the creed, a new order of priests, &c.? Would it not produce increased perplexity about which god to apply to in any emergency? The thing least strange in the case was, perhaps (for he was *man*), that he should forget what he had learned by experience of the God of Daniel, though, by his own confession at the time, "*a God of gods,*" and superior to all known in his empire or in the world. But, then, was the new god to excel both all them, and that God too? If not, what need? and what just claim? and what was to make him thus excel?

It is a surmise of some learned men (Grotius, &c.) that it might be designed as the act of deifying, or rather of expressing and proclaiming the deification of, his deceased father. At any rate, a very leading prompter in the affair was the monarch's own self-importance. It was for him to show himself lord of even the religion of his subjects. It was for him to constitute even a god for them, if he pleased. It was for him to decree a faith, and rites, and ceremonies—and penal statutes to enforce them; to stand forward thus before his subjects the very front and supremacy of *all* power, both in heaven and earth—to "*exalt himself above all that is called god, and that is worshipped,*" 2 Thess. ii. 4. We need not observe, how much there has been of the same spirit and practice in all nations and ages.

Then there was the process;—an examination of the public, or rather the royal treasures; the gold collected and computed; the consultation and employment of artificers;—operations of the smithery;—frequent statements or inspections of the progress;—perhaps reports circulated through the empire, of the grand business that was going on. When, at length, bellows, hammers, and chisels, had created a god, he was dragged as a load, on some strong carriage, to the appointed spot, and there mounted to the elevation of sixty cubits in the air,—pedestal included, else there would be a total disproportion between the height and breadth assigned. It is not probable that it could be a solid statue, at least, not solid of gold.

It is most likely that the imperial mandate to the great men of all the provinces had been despatched some while before, appointing the time; and that the idol was erected but just immediately against the specified day.

This grand assembly was summoned for the act of dedication,—that is, a solemn recognition and celebration of the object as a god, including the first adoration, after which it should be, perpetually and without question, an object of Divine honours.

The great men had been summoned as a kind of representatives of all the people of the empire. Perhaps not one of them failed to be there from any principle of conscience against idolatry. And as to the willingly compliant conduct of the assembly, one is a little disposed to wonder at the king's having made ready such an expedient of persuasion, as that which he points at, to enforce his command,—that is, the furnace, which was prepared and conspicuous, near the station of the monarch and the idol—and was, no doubt, already glowing and flaming—large too, as afterwards appears, like a wide pit or gulf of fire. He certainly had not been accustomed to experience any disobedience to his com-

mands. Why, then, such an argument of persuasion at hand? This might be for mere despotic pomp,—to impress a terror of the very thought of such a thing as disobedience. But it may be suspected, that this was possibly done at the instigation of the haters of Daniel and his three friends. Those three men were on the ground, among the other persons in high office. It had been in vain for them to absent themselves, if they had been inclined to do so. But they had higher orders to be there! orders which they dared not disobey, though we shall soon see what *else* they could without hesitation set at defiance. Their faith was warned of another Monarch, and also of another fire! a proper fear of whom, and of which, will overcome all other fear. “*Fear not them who can kill the body, but after that have no more that they can do; but fear Him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell.*” They were certain to be at the place, without any force used by their enemies; for, they knew it could not be permitted by their “*Master in heaven,*” that his servants should be in a conspicuous station, in a heathen land, without bearing on them the most explicit marks to whom they belonged. They were assured that, in the present case, there must not be allowed a grand triumphant day to idolatry and the impious pride of power,—undisturbed by at least a protest in the name of the Almighty. Was it for them, when their Eternal Lord was to be dishonoured, to slink away into a base impunity? And, besides, were they to give to their own people, in captivity there, the lesson and example of betraying, even negatively, their religion, the only true one on earth? They knew their duty, and addressed themselves to perform it.

It would seem that this duty devolved on them alone. A question might arise concerning the numerous other Jews then in Babylon,—what became of them? Were they

placed out of the account on this grand occasion? It has been conjectured, in answer, that, as this was to be the solemn primary act of sanctioning, authorizing, establishing, the new worship,—the common people might, in this first instance, be left out of the account, as being held of no weight;—that it was the chief men only of the empire that were wanted, or held of any value for this purpose. The citation, therefore, was perhaps only to them; and so the Jewish common people were not required to be present. And there is no mention of any Jews in high official station but these three, except Daniel, who, from some cause not recorded, was necessarily absent.

There were, then, three men, come on the ground under the fearful vocation to brave the authority, and power, and wrath, of a lofty potentate,—the indignation of all his mighty lords, and the rage of a devouring fire. We admire heroic self-devotement in all other situations; we are elated at the view, for instance, of Leonidas and his small band, calmly taking their station in Thermopylæ in the face of countless legions. But here was a still nobler position taken,—by men who were fit to take it, because they were sure not to desert it. And it would betray a most corrupt state of our sentiments, if heroic devotement displayed for God,—for truth,—for religion—do not affect us as sublimer than all other heroism.

We may suppose the utmost calmness—the most unostentatious manner, in these three men; *that* belongs to real invincible fortitude. And, they had no occasion to begin with parade—to make a flourish of premature zeal! Exhibition enough was to come erewhile! They were “*to be made a spectacle to God, and to angels, and to men.*” They quietly waited, looking at the monarch, the idol, and the fire. They, probably, did not even speak to one an-

other. There was nothing they could need to say; it was past the time for consulting, questioning, or mutual exhortation. They were in the wrong place, if any thing remained to be yet decided.

But, think of the brief interval of suspense and silence, between the conclusion of the herald's proclamation, and the first note of the signal-music! What would be their sensations in waiting for it to strike? Think of the intensity of listening! How *much* the soul may be said to live during such moments, when not amazed and stupified! The suspense was not long; time was not to be wasted, by either the powers below, or the Power above. The haughty lord of the whole scene was eager,—the furnace was blazing;—the music sounded,—and all fell to the earth! all the proudest personages of the empire prostrate! And, at whose dictate—under what conviction,—were they thus submissively performing, in appearance at least, the most solemn act that human, that created beings can? The mere dictate of a creature, that was one day to become dust;—the conviction, that if they did not adore whatever he was pleased to decree a god, they should incur his vengeance.

Thus, this proud, and numerous, and lordly assembly acknowledged that neither their bodies nor their souls were their own. But so acknowledged, too, the three men that remained standing upright. *Their* bodies and souls were not theirs to surrender, to a monarch or to an idol. They belonged to another Power; and to him their bodies, if he should so appoint, were to be offered in sacrifice, on that altar which was flaming full in their view.

It were going, perhaps, quite to the extreme of possibility, if we should suppose in them such perfect self-possession, that they could look around with regret and compassion on this wide field of prostrate and degraded

humanity. But, they had not long to look; there were vigilant eyes on them, though it seems, not those of the king himself. His devotions were interrupted, and turned into surprise and indignation, by accusers of these three men. These accusers well understood their profession. With artful malice they advert to favours and honours the king had conferred on the accused, in order to aggravate the charge of disobedience, by an implication of peculiar ingratitude. And then, with the true address of sycophant courtiers, they put the alleged *impiety* in the form of *disloyalty*. It was as against *him* that the offence was committed, more than against the god. "*They have not regarded thee, O king!*" And this very effective art has never been forgotten by the haters and persecutors of the protesters in behalf of true religion. In their zealous charges and movements against heresy, schism, separation,—they have always taken care, first and last, to insist, with peculiar stress, on this point, of its being a flagrant offence against the state, the government,—an insult to the reigning powers. And this compound of malignant hypocrisy and vile servility has *yet* a great part to play in the world.

The three recusants of Babylon were instantly ordered into the royal presence. And the potentate, powerless over the "*rage and fury*" which agitated him, did yet display some remainder of a reasonable disposition. The truth of the accusation was not to be doubted; but he expressed his amazement at their conduct as what he could hardly believe against them. He signified that the past should go unpunished, and he would consider them as only *now* brought to the test; so that, had they shrunk or repented, it was not too late; at the same time, positively denouncing the consequence of refusal, with a fire in his visage which seemed like the reflection of those flames which were burning for them, not far off; and warning them not to deceive

themselves by a vain trust in any superior power. "*Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?*"

He had not to wait for their decision. "*We are not careful to answer thee in this matter;*" meaning, "we have no thought or deliberation to give to the alternative; no question or hesitation remains to us; we seek no evasion or delay; our decision is absolute, because our duty is plain." And, in direct intentional contradiction to what he had arrogantly and impiously said, in contempt of the power of any god, they say, they have a propitious and almighty God, who can deliver; and if he shall not, they not the less owe him, and will render him fidelity even to death; satisfied, in that case, that the sacrifice is required for his glory, and that he will reward it elsewhere.

Ver. 17. "*If it be so, our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king.*" Ver. 18. "*But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.*"

Some learned critics have given, as more exactly expressive of the sense of the original, an altered construction of the two verses together, thus, "*Whether our God, who is able to deliver us, shall deliver us or not, be it known unto thee,*" &c.; thus taking away the apparent expression of their assurance that he would deliver them. We cannot know in what degree they did expect extraordinary Divine interposition, but this construction of their reply exhibits them in a still higher, completer character of magnanimity and devotement. Such a magnanimity,—which the emperor might know there was but one other person among all his great men capable of evincing,—might have struck him with reverential admiration,—might have thrown him back on his reflections and remembrance,—for, he could not but recollect something of the God of Daniel and his friends.

But no; pride and anger had the ascendent in that hour; it was not for *him* to be baffled, and to yield, in the face of such an assembly. In the utmost extremity of fury, he ordered the fire to be augmented to a corresponding intensity. "*Seven times hotter*,"—a phrase not of strict numerical import, but meaning the utmost intensity possible, by means of the most effectual fuel that could in haste be supplied. This, it may be said, could not be an unwelcome circumstance to the appointed victims, as securing, if they were to die, the shorter duration of the suffering. Our martyr, RIDLEY, slowly consuming at the stake, earnestly entreated, "*Give me more fire—more fire!*" And the same thing is recorded of the victims in some of the infernal sacrifices of the Inquisition. Still, however, in the instance before us, it was a preparatory operation not to be looked upon with indifference. The devouring monster grew awfully larger in their sight, as if a still mightier fiend glowed and glared in it; and the aggravated roar of the furnace would not sound exactly like the notes of the dulcimer which had preceded.

The binding of these three men was a very superfluous act. But it had a certain judicial appearance; and it exposed them more formally in the character of criminals and victims. They were bound in their garments (ver. 21), that is, not by means of their garments, used as bonds, but bound as they were, with their complete dress upon them. The parts of that dress are specified in English denominations very little appropriate to the eastern forms of vesture; such a term as "*hats*,"* for instance, ought not to have been admitted into the description.

"*The most mighty men*" of the soldiers were ordered out to bear them to the fire. And, it was become so fierce and tremendous that they could not go near enough to perform

* "*Turbans*."—Eng. marg. reading. (Ed.)

this office effectually, without being themselves scorched to death; but they durst not stop short, for the royal fury drove them impetuously to the deed. The command was as "*urgent*" and terrible on the one side, as the fire on the other. If the music had been suspended, it would probably be here renewed, it being a customary accompaniment, anciently and to this day, of the most horrid rites of paganism. And now the consummation, the crowning sanction, would seem to be added to the establishment and authority of the new divinity and worship,—by a human sacrifice. But the matter was not so to end. It might so have ended without impeachment of the Divine Governor of the world, with respect to the fate of these his faithful servants; for he has a right to demand an absolute martyrdom,—an actual surrender of life for his cause, and often has required it. But, in this instance, if it had so ended, it would have appeared to the whole empire, like a complete triumph and sanction gained to idolatry.

There would be, among the great men of the assembly, much self-congratulation that *they* were no such insane and desperate fanatics. And we may doubt whether much of their compassion, or even admiration, attended the three faithful to so magnanimous an exit; for, invincible bravery for conscience and the true religion, was, among heathens, immeasurably less accounted of, than courage displayed in any other way. It was remarkably so in the case of the primitive Christians. The personal enemies of these three men, (and many such they must have had, who hated them for their incorruptible public virtue)—*these*, too, had now their moment of lively gratification.

But, the idolatrous chiefs and lords had not *all* the delight to themselves, that there was at that moment, on that field;—the most animated exultation of all was glowing amidst the flames of the furnace! *There* was what they might all

have envied, as they envied sometimes the delights attributed to the high condition of their gods. The three men bound, were cast into the furnace. Think of the moment of their falling in! It is beyond our faculties to conceive the first sensations of men, suddenly plunged into the midst of a vast mass of fire, of the most raging intensity, in their living susceptible bodies, which even a spark would have hurt,—and yet feeling no pain, no terror.

We may imagine a momentary amazement, but quickly changed into a full consciousness of exquisite delight. It is beyond our power, however, to bring such a fact to our comprehension. Consider, it is according to natural laws and relations that pleasure is produced, that is, the constituted condition of human pleasure. But when, in a rare instance, by the Divine will and agency, pleasure is to arise from a perfect and stupendous reversal of those natural laws, we are thrown off from any power and means for estimating that pleasure. It belongs to a different economy; the recipients are not then within the bounds and order of mere mortal existence, and their pleasure may approximate or partake of the quality of that of superior beings. St. Paul was evidently once in this undefinable and mysterious state.

The attention of Nebuchadnezzar seems to have continued fixed on the fiery receptacle; perhaps with some relenting for what he had done; possibly with some degree of doubt, or suspense of expectation, respecting the consequence. He seems to have been the first to perceive that his fury, and the doom he had awarded, were frustrated. And with that prompt kind of honesty which appears conspicuous in his character, he was the first to proclaim it. When immediate evidence rose before him, though to confound and reproach him, he never stayed to digest his mortification, or to seek some saving retreat for his pride.

He proclaimed, instantly, that the three men and another, were walking, unhurt, in the midst of the fire. And he did not send some official messenger, but went himself to hail, and call them forth; he ardently wished them with him again. But they were in far superior society; the "*angel*" of God was there, a form "*like a son of God*," (as Bishop Lowth observes it ought to be expressed.) The angel was, by his nature, no subject of the power of fire; and, for the time, his human companions were exalted to the same condition, by the encircling power of the Almighty.

Nebuchadnezzar loudly called them to come forth. Had he any authority to do so? He might have left it to the discretion of their splendid visitant and associate, to lead them forth when he should judge it the proper time. This once, they were clearly beyond the monarch's jurisdiction. He had, in intention, sent them out of the world; and therefore, as to *him*, they possessed the privilege and exemption of departed spirits; and they were seen actually associated with a being that belonged not to the earth. As to the monarch, that space of fire was as a tract of another world. And besides, they could have no wish to come forth. It was the sublimest, most delightful region they had ever dwelt in yet. In their state of feeling, that burning floor was preferable to the marble pavements of his superbest palace; nay, preferable to any spot that Adam trod in the garden of Eden, with the first green and flowers of the new world,—the charm of primeval beauty. Those waving and darting fires, aspiring aloft above them, were richer in delight than the blooming arbours of Paradise; for Divinity was more *sensibly* present there;—a situation different from Eden in this signal circumstance, that, there, angels walked with man, in a scene where man was naturally safe,—was at home; whereas here men walked with an angel, in a place where, by natural laws, the angel alone could have walked,

or lived. So can the Almighty make all the elements of the creation subservient to the felicity of those that love him!

Nebuchadnezzar called them forth,—but it was a spot (the single one in his dominions), where the imperial monarch durst not go to bring them forth,—nor any in his army; it was interdicted ground! At length the three men came out from the fire,—their celestial companion being left to depart, like Manoah's angel, who ascended in the flame. They were looked upon by the amazed and humiliated assembly of grandees; and the effect of fire had not passed on their very garments or their hair. The king forgot or scorned his idol, and once more "*blessed and adored the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.*" He justly promoted them in his kingdom; but he had no honours to confer, after what Heaven had made to shine and flame upon them on that great day. He could not confer honour on those who had triumphed over him and his gods. And as to them, there could remain, after that day, but one thing more that was sublime enough for their ambition,—*the translation by Death!*

December 25, 1823.

LECTURE XII.

BENEFICIAL CO-OPERATION OF ALL THINGS FOR THE CHRISTIAN.

ROMANS viii. 28

"We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

At several of our former meetings, occasion was taken to describe the gloomy, disastrous, and mysterious condition of the world and the times, to make some reflections on the evident and awful prevalence of evil, and to advert to the hopes and promises of a happier age to come.

But as our lot is cast upon the present time, and in the midst of so dark a dispensation, it is very desirable to keep in sight whatever considerations are most adapted to impart consolation, and inspire devout gratitude, even in beholding the state of things as they are. In a gloomy winter of the north, while the sun is nearly absent, and a dreary scene stretches round on all sides, so much more need and value is there of the cheerful fire and the constant burning lamp. And such a warmth and light are given by the truth declared in our text. *"All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."*

But, perhaps, the first idea suggested by such a declaration may be,—what a different thing this world is to the two different classes of its inhabitants, according to the different state of their minds,—to those *"that love God,"* and those who do not—his friends and his enemies! As simple matters

of fact, the circumstances of the world are much alike, or the very same, to both. The general order of nature and providence,—the aspects and influences of the earth and heavens; the vicissitudes of the seasons, with their severities and bounties; the sustenance and protection of life,—are the same to both. Both are fed and clothed, sleep and awake, dwell and travel. To both is the same mingled distribution of health and sickness, accidents and misfortunes. They both share in great public benefits and calamities; in the effects of a wise and beneficent government, or of an insane and barbarous tyranny; in prosperity and peace, or the devastations perpetrated by war; and if there be pestilences, famines, earthquakes, or fires. In this more favoured part of the world, the divine revelation shines on both classes alike; the Redeemer, the Son of God, is manifested before them, with all the grace, the blessings, the promises, the prospective glories of his gospel. Does not all this appear a very comprehensive likeness in the condition of men? And this fact, of the likeness or sameness in so many circumstances, in the human condition, both to the good and the evil, would be a most mysterious thing, without a light cast upon it from heaven. And this was forcibly and painfully felt by thoughtful men, even under the light, but the mere glimmering light, of the earlier revelation, as by the Psalmist and the writer of the book of Ecclesiastes.

To us is granted a light that pierces deeper through this sameness on the surface of things. And then, what an immense difference! The most striking of all kinds of unlikeness is that, where the effects are immeasurably different, while the things themselves are the same. Behold, then, this economy of the same things constituting the portion in this world, of both the good and the evil! View it as in the effects of these things upon the two classes respect-

ively. The good things, good in themselves, in the condition of man on earth,—what do they do for evil men, the enemies of God? and the evil things, what? What to *them* is the effect of all nature, with its beauties, its grandeurs, its vicissitudes, its productions? What to *them*, the bounties of Providence, the support and protection, the health, the pleasures, the wealth? Or what, to *them*, the contrary part of their experience,—the privations, the disappointments, the sickness, the share of general calamities? What are all these, *in effect*, to men, who continue still irreligious, thoughtless, unthankful, unhumbled, unholy enemies of God—rendering no service to him,—making no spiritual improvement, no preparation for the eternal state, but frustrating all the discipline of Heaven?

Now, where can terms be found to express the measure of the difference between such a condition, and that which is asserted of “*them that love God?*” And think, what a force of contrast is thrown on these two opposite states of a human soul, by this single consideration,—that the one is so disposed as to derive no essential benefit from the entire order and total of things,—the other is so disposed, that all things operate towards it beneficially. Is it possible to conceive any representation that should, in all reason, strike with a more awakening impression or a stronger incitement? To sojourn in this world of crowded objects and incidents, with an experience of its vast variety of pleasing and painful things, and in a state of mind which repels all the most precious good that they might impart! Or, in a state which draws and receives into the soul, from all the diversity of things, a pure, ethereal emanation, a vital spirit, augmenting the inner life, refining, invigorating, and elevating the soul, to a readiness to fly off into eternity!

And, that one state of the soul should thus *repel* the essential, spiritual good of all things, and that an opposite

one should *attract* it—is not strange, if we consider what principle it is that is present or absent there—*the love of God*. That being wanting, how should the soul derive the good of things? The perception, the discriminating faculty, is wanting; the transmuting power is wanting; the principle to repel the evil is wanting; nay, the very will to obtain the good is wanting. The happy adaptation belongs only to “*them that love God, who are the called according to his purpose.*”

The latter part of the sentence explains how they come to love God,—“*not that they first loved him, but that he loved them.*” They were the objects of his gracious “*purpose.*” “*Predestinated,*” (says the apostle in another place) “*according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.*” Again, “*according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” Again, “*who hath called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.*” And so the verse following the text proceeds, in continuation and explanation of it, “*whom he did foreknow, them he also did predestinate, them he also called,*” &c. No one that knows anything aright of the dreadfully alienated state of our nature, can for a moment believe that a condition of the soul in which the love of God should prevail, can be produced, created, by any less cause than the sovereign operation of the Divine Spirit; in other words, by an effectual “*calling.*” But, then, neither can he imagine, that this effectual operation, this supernatural “*calling,*” should be an undetermined action, as if from a sudden, and, as it were, incidental thought of the Almighty. “*Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world.*”

This, then, is the sacred train and process; the ancient,

unalterable intention, or "*purpose*," fulfilled at length in "*the calling according to that purpose*," and this "*calling*" being an inspiration of "*the love of God*" into the renewed soul. And this places the soul in a new system of relations with the world and its events, and *that*, the most advantageous one that is possible. It is, essentially, a reversal of the former, and merely natural, state of relations with the world, (that is, as to the spiritual effect.) Not that we can be so thoughtless, as to represent it as being an entire reversal. No; unhappily, those who experience it in the greatest degree have to deplore a sad remainder of the old natural relation to the world,—of that state on which things and events do not operate beneficially. But the indwelling of the love of God constitutes a *radical* change, so that "*the working together*" of things upon the mind, shall be, mainly and predominantly, "*for good*:" and progressively more so, in proportion as that sacred principle more fully prevails.

We observed, that, in the absence of this Divine principle, the soul is naturally incapable, unqualified, to receive the essential good from all things. On the contrary,—that principle prevailing within it creates (shall we say?) a natural adaptation to derive the good. Not in any manner independently of the continual operation of the Spirit of God; but at the same time, that Divine Spirit, in having imparted this heavenly principle, and in maintaining it in the soul, has given it a state, or constitution, naturally adapted to derive good from all things. For consider; the love of God, as far as it prevails in the soul, makes it quick to perceive, to dislike, and to repel, all that is evil; makes it solicitous, vigilant, and active, to apprehend and obtain all the most essential good. The love of God will naturally connect the thought of Him with "*all things*." The love of God counterworks the internal corruptions and evil passions

which render the soul subject to the noxious influence of things. The love of God moves the soul to have continual recourse to him. Thus the love of God, by its natural tendency, is adapted, and adapts the soul, to secure the noble advantage named in our text.

But, then, beyond all this, the supreme security is, that God will have it so. He will make "*all things work for good to them that love him.*" They are the most valued objects he has in the world; and it may well be believed that *theirs* shall not be suffered to be a secondary interest, sacrificed to any other,—that they shall not be left to chances and hazards for their welfare. For their sake, he has willed and has given something incomparably more valuable than all things here, even his beloved Son, who is constituted "*to the church, head over all things.*" And this cannot be less than a security that "*all things*" shall be made to minister to them, in conformity to the purpose of that supreme gift for their welfare. His grand intention, in this chief thing, he will not suffer any other things effectually to counteract. But the same exertion of power that can prevent their doing so, can also make them co-operate for his people. And the declaration is, that they do "*work together for good.*"

But, then, is it not very striking to consider what a system there is going on, of which the men of the world, the strangers and enemies to God, are very little aware? They think not that the world itself, with all its large economy, is maintained chiefly on account of "*them that love God.*" They little consider, that this mingled scene is serving the purpose of a place of discipline, a great school, a field, for training, exercising, improving, maturing, a select and peculiar race, in preparation for another world. It is but very indistinctly apparent to them, how the multitude of things, and the course of events, of whatever kind, are

put under a sovereign requisition to contribute service, and invaluable profit to the peculiar people;—how the great arrangements of Nature, and the procedure of Providence, are directed in a combined operation for their welfare. They look on the *good* in the system, in its mere natural, material character of good,—but little aware that this is made to impart a far higher, nobler, kind of good, to “*them that love God.*” And they regard the *evil* (the suffering, the affliction) as simply evil; hardly sensible that this, even this, is turned to infinite advantage to the children of God.

The proud and mighty ones of the earth are exerting their utmost power and devices to make “*all things*” serve their interests,—their aggrandizement,—fame, or luxury; never dreaming that the Almighty Potentate is making “*all things,*” and *them* among the rest, co-operate for the advantage of his friends; and many of these being such as they would disdain to look upon. Monarchs are thus unconsciously tributaries to their subjects; tyrant lords are performing service to their slaves. And when these lofty and arrogant beings are working with all their might against one another, in prodigious contests and conflicts, little do they suspect that they are all the while co-operating, “*working together,*” for the benefit of another class! Would not *that*, if it could suddenly come on their perception, pacify them at once? “What!” they would say, on both sides, “what! working with all this strife, and tumult, and cost, for the advantage of those people they call *saints!*” The very pride that raised the contest, would still it!

“*All things;*” that is, all things that attend them in life;—all things that have a part in their lot. A large assertion! but where is the impossibility of its being true? A man whose soul is animated and sanctified by the love of

God, what can he see, or hear, or encounter, from which, under the aid of the Divine Spirit, he absolutely cannot extract any good? what, in the world of nature? what, in the world of man? Even the worst thing he can behold, wickedness,—the worst he can hear, profaneness or blasphemy,—can he draw no good from them? With this holy affection glowing in his soul, suppose him placed (if by necessity, and not choice) in the very centre of a scene of excessive iniquity,—might he not draw from every point of the circuit something salutary? some manifestation of the nature of man,—of the dreadful nature of sin,—the rectitude of the Divine law,—the justice of the Divine judgments,—the necessity of an omnipotent agency to convert the human soul? Might he not be struck with a religious horror, lest himself should fall into sin? Or inspired with fervent thankfulness for having been saved or redeemed from it? might he not feel an emotion to implore the interference of Almighty Power? Thus he might, in the very worst field, reap invaluable spiritual advantage.

“All things.” It were easy, but is unnecessary to recount distinctly the kinds or classes of things. There are the temporal good things in this life—good in themselves, simply considered. Now it is a mighty thing to say, of any mortal, that these shall absolutely work for his good. But the prevalent love of God will make them do so; will excite thankful admiration of the Divine bounty,—stimulate a zeal to serve God,—more benevolent compassion for those who are suffering the contrary of this temporal good—and excite to active charity. To apprehend the value of the principle that thus sanctifies the use of the good things of this life, look at what they become in the hands of strangers to God!

But, the most animating light of the glorious truth

asserted in the text falls on the darker side of the view of human life,—on the harsher, the afflictive, portion of good men's experience. Like others, "*they that love God*" are passing through a field, a wilderness, where numberless evils are, as it were, let loose, to assail them,—to harass, pain, plague them. How many things are there with stings, with darts, with bitter cups! And all this evil affects them, in the first instance, in its own proper quality. The grand transmuting power comes in, not before, but after. If they are involved in great general calamities, there is alarm, anxiety, sense of hazard and peril, deprivation, struggles under hardships, and perhaps destitution. But all this may be made the means far more effectually to convince them that, "*this is not their rest*;"—that this world will not do for them;—to promote their submissive adoration of an all-governing, wise, though mysterious Providence,—and to inspire an energy of desire and effort toward a better country. And so far as they feel this to be the inestimable effect, will they not bless God even for the cause?

The apostles had often to enforce and magnify this great topic of consolation, in reference to the persecutions to which they that loved God, and were the followers of Christ, were doomed. And when the sufferers found, that amidst their tribulations, their faith was invigorated,—their patience consolidated,—their dedication to God rendered more absolute,—their view of heaven brought nearer, and looking the brighter for the intervening gloom,—they were enabled to "*rejoice in tribulation*," from the experience that all was working "*for good*." There was no possible good on earth so great to them, as that which their afflictions were working for them.

But there are the more ordinary pains and grievances of life, incident at all times; bodily sufferings,—distress in

the family,—frustrated cares and exertions—or wrongs suffered from the injustice of men. But what pious man, that has suffered these, has not to tell, that such things (under Divine discipline) have contributed to wrench him from the idolatry of the world, and, as it were, to force him to seek his all in God? And even the evils of a spiritual kind; the pains of conscience,—fears of the Divine wrath,—plunges of temptation,—perplexities concerning religious truth;—through these, as a severe discipline, many minds have been drawn and exercised, to the attainment of a happy elevation of Christian maturity, sanctity, and peace. The spiritual good is infinitely the noblest to which the evils of life can be made to work. But it might be added, that it has sometimes been in the plan of Providence to direct their co-operation to a great temporal good; as in the case of Jacob, who said, "*All these things are against me;*" in the instance also of Job. But still the highest good is, that the soul be made better.

Each agency, separately taken, may be made beneficial. But observe the force of the word "*together.*" The Almighty does not work by means and agencies apart, but by their concurrence and combination. He keeps in order of co-operation what appears to us a vast confusion of things. But for the faith of this, his servants might look on the crowd and tumult of things with an utter distraction in their calculations and hopes. They behold a thousand different things in action (each doing something) around them. But how they can be all,—or, often, any small number of them, co-operating to any one effect, they cannot comprehend and conjecture. Often they appear in utter counteraction, baffling and destroying the effects of one another. Yet faith is assured there is a stupendous invisible machinery which holds them all working in connection! And he that loves and adores God dares not

point to one of them and say, "That is absolutely needless," or, "That obstructs rather than co-operates or conduces."

But what admiration is due to the wisdom and power that *can*, and to the goodness that *will*, make all "*work together for good!*" Sometimes, in the result, it has become evident of what essential importance, in the process, was some apparently very little or trifling thing in the combined number of things. And then it may have occurred to a devout man to reflect, on the supposition that, during the process, he might have been permitted a sovereign discretion to throw out that one little circumstance, as trifling, needless, and impertinent, what the consequence would have been!

"*Work together.*" Taking a narrower view, we may observe, that sometimes we have seen one thing operating, and another, and another,—each in some sort of reference and tendency to an end, but still with little effect, or apparent coincidence,—till at length one thing more, unthought of, has come in, and *that* has instantly brought them all into combination, and thrown all their forces, in conjunction, directly upon the object, the effect.

It is not impossible, even, that in some instances, a concurrence of different and opposite temptations may have been made to work the safety of a good man, who would have been deeply endangered by any one of them coming separately. God can bring the required causes to "*work together.*" If the secret designs of Providence, for a certain space of time forward, might be revealed to us, it would be seen, that many good things, intended for one and another of God's servants now living, depend on a co-operation of causes that are at this hour widely asunder,—perhaps depend, for example, on the meeting of several persons, who are at this time in several and distant parts of the world,

and entire strangers to one another, possibly even in name. But they are certain to meet, and in co-operation perform the appointed service to him that God intends it for. And often both he and they may hereafter wonder at that strange management of Providence which so brought it to pass. In short, in ways beyond number, that declaration is continually in the process of being verified, "*All things are yours, the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours,*" and this is because they "*are Christ's, and Christ is God's.*"

And, finally, this is but the introductory state of privilege, to result in that greater state, in which it is promised to the faithful and victorious, that they "*shall inherit all things.*" And thus how true it is, that "*godliness,*" the love of God, "*is profitable for all things,*" "*having the promise,*" in the highest sense, "*of the life that now is, and of that which is to come!*"

LECTURE XLII.

ACCESS TO GOD.

HEBREWS xi. 6.

"He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

No saying is more common among us, or perhaps leaves a more transient impression, than that to approach to God, while enjoined as a duty, is also an eminent privilege. As no one thinks of questioning it, we easily let it pass, as if there needed no more but to assent to it.

That it can thus be an unmeaning sentence, a lifeless notion, indistinctly presented to the apprehension, and holding no communication with the affections, betrays that the soul is taking little account of its best resources for happiness. But such it will be, unless we can be serious enough for an exercise of thought, to apprehend as a great and interesting reality what we have so often allowed ourselves to hear, or to utter, as little more than an insignificant common-place of religious discourse. Can we be content it should be so? When it is understood that, among the things possible to man, is the very extraordinary one of "*coming to God*," shall we not make a faithful, earnest effort, that the thing so affirmed and believed may have to us all the effect of a reality, in being brought with clearness to our apprehension, and with power over our feelings?

It is a wonderful idea, even as apprehended at once, in a

single act of thought, without intermediate process of advancing from less to greater, in ascent towards the greatest—the idea of the infinite, almighty, eternal Being, as to be approached, and spoken to, and communicated with, by *man*. But a gradation of thought, a progressive rising toward the transcendent and supreme, might contribute to magnify the wonderfulness of the fact, of man daring and permitted to enter into a direct communication with God.—But by what order and train of ideas might we seek to advance towards the magnificence of the contemplation?

If we might allow ourselves in such an imagination, as that the selected portion of all humanity, the very best and wisest persons on earth, were brought and combined into a permanent assembly, and invested with a sovereign authority—the highest wisdom, virtue, science, and power thus united—would not a perfectly free access for the humblest, poorest, most distressed, and otherwise friendless, to such an assemblage, with a certainty of their most kind and sedulous attention being given—of their constant *will* to render aid—of their wisdom and power being promptly exercised—would not this be deemed an inestimable privilege to all within the compass of such an empire? Indeed, if such a thing might be (an extravagantly wild imagination, we confess), it would take the place of Providence in the minds of the multitude, and be idolized.

But take a higher position, and suppose that there were such an economy that the most illustrious of the *departed saints* held the office of being practically, though unseen, patrons, protectors, assistants, guides, to men on earth; that the spirits of patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, could be drawn, by those who desired it, to a direct personal attention, and to an exercise of their benignity and interference—would not this appear a resource of incalculable value? It is because it naturally would be so, that the

Romish church was so successful in imposing on the people the fiction of such an economy as an undoubted reality, (and, indeed, paganism had before done something of a similar kind.) So gratifying, so consoling, so animating, has this imaginary privilege been felt by millions of that church, that their devotion has seemed actually to stop at this level of invisible existence; the Almighty Father, and the Redeemer, comparatively forgotten.

But there is *another* far loftier ascension. We are informed of a glorious order of intelligences that have never dwelt in flesh; many of whom may have enjoyed their existence from a remoteness of time surpassing what we can conceive of eternity; with an immense expansion of being and powers; with a perpetual augmentation of the goodness inspired by their Creator; and exercising their virtues and unknown powers in appointed offices of beneficence throughout the system of unnumbered worlds. Would it not seem a pre-eminent privilege, if the children of the dust might obtain a direct communication with them; might invoke them, accost them, draw them to a fixed attention, and with a sensible evidence of their indulgent patience and celestial benignity? Would not this seem an exaltation of felicity, throwing into shade everything that could be imagined to be derived to us from the benevolence and power of mortal or glorified humanity?

Now, here we are at the summit of created existence; and up to this sublime elevation we have none of these supposed privileges. No! there is no such conjunction of the greatest virtue, wisdom, and power on earth. Departed saints have no appointment to hear our petitions; and when we perceive, as it were, the distant radiance of an inconceivably nobler order of beings, it is with the consciousness that we cannot come into their sensible presence and recognition, cannot invoke their express attention, cannot lay

hold on their power, cannot commit to them the momentous charge of our interests.

Thus we have ascended by degrees to the most illustrious of created beings, for the transient luxury of imagining what it would be to engage in our favour the intelligence, goodness, and power of those glorious spirits; but to find ourselves hopelessly far off from such access. In the capacity of receiving our petitions, they exist not for us; as to *that* object, these mighty agents are strangers to us.

What, then, to do next? Next, our spirits have to raise their thoughts to an awful elevation above all subordinate existence in earth and heaven, in order to approach a presence where they *may* implore a beneficent attention, and enter into a communication with Him who is uncreated and infinite; a transition compared to which the distance from the inferior to the nobler, and then to the noblest of created beings, is reduced to nothing; as one lofty eminence on an elevated mountain—and a higher,—and the highest—but thence to the starry heavens!

But think, who is it that is thus to “*come to God?*” Man! little, feeble, mortal, fallen, sinful man! He is, if we may speak in such language, to venture an act expressly to arrest the attention of that stupendous Being; to signify, in the most direct manner, that he is by choice and design in that presence intentionally to draw on himself the notice, the aspect of the Almighty. The purpose is, to speak to, Him in a *personal manner*; to detain Him in communication. The approaching petitioner is to utter thoughts, for God to admit them into *His* thoughts! He would cause himself to be distinctly and individually listened to by a Being who is receiving the adoration of the most exalted spirits, and of all the holy intelligences in the universe; by Him whose power is sustaining and governing all its regions and inhabitants. He seeks to cause *his words* to be listened

to by Him whose *own words* may be, at the very time, commanding new creations into existence.

But reflect, also, that it is an act to call the special attention of Him whose purity has a perfect perception of all that is evil, that is unholy, in the creature that approaches Him ; of Him whom the applicant is conscious he has not, to the utmost of his faculties, adored or loved : alas ! the very contrary '

What a striking, what an amazing view is thus presented of the situation the unworthy mortal is placed in, the position which he presumes to take, in "*coming to God.*" How surprising then it is, how alarming it well may be, to reflect on the manner in which, too often, we use this privilege ! What a miserably faint conception of the Sovereign Majesty ! A reverence so defective in solemnity, that it admits the intrusion of every trivial suggestion. Thoughts easily diverted away by the slightest casual association. An inanimate state of feeling, indifference almost, in petitioning the greatest blessings, and deprecating the most fearful evils. So that, on serious reflection, the consciousness would be forced upon us, of its being too much to hope that such devotions can be accepted, such petitions granted.

To rebuke this irreligion, infesting and spoiling the very acts of religion, think again of the situation of such a creature as man coming into the immediate presence of the Divine Majesty. The very extremes of spiritual existence—the infinitely Most Glorious, and the lowest, meanest of all, brought into communication ; the absolutely holy, and the miserably depraved—the guilty. We may conceive that a creature of even such humble rank as man, if he were but perfectly innocent, might approach to a communication with the Eternal and Infinite Essence, though not without inexpressible awe, yet without terror ; but since he is impure and guilty, the idea of his "*coming to God*" would be no

other than the image of a perishable thing brought within the action of "*a consuming fire*;" the moral quality of the Divine Nature being in direct antipathy to that of such a creature approaching. Let a man, really and deeply affected with the debasement of his nature and his individual guilt, stand consciously before the all-perfect holiness of God; let him think what it must be to come in immediate *contact* (shall we say?) with that holiness; every look at his sinfulness, every secret accusation of his conscience, would fix and determine his attention to the Divine holiness—irresistibly so—rather than to any other attribute: for in all comparisons, even with our fellow men, our attention fixes the most strongly on that in which we are the most in contrast and antipathy with them, especially when the contrast presents something for us to fear. So with a creature consciously full of sin in immediate approach to Him who is "*glorious in holiness*," the attention would be arrested by that, as an opposite, a hostile, and a terrible quality; and the longer it were beheld, the more it would appear kindling and glowing into a consuming flame.

A sinful being immediately under the burning rays of Omnipotent Holiness! The idea is so fearful, that one might think it should be the most earnest, the most passionate desire of a human soul, that there should be some intervention to save it from the fatal predicament. No wonder, then, that the most devout men of every age of the Christian dispensation have welcomed with joy and gratitude the doctrine of a Mediator, manifested in the person of the Son of God, by whom the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man are, as it were, *kept asunder*; and a happy communication can take place through the medium of One who stands before the Divine Majesty of Justice, in man's behalf, with a propitiation and a perfect righteousness.

Thus far, and too long, we have dwelt on the wonderfulness of the fact and the greatness of the privilege of "*coming to God.*" We have to consider, a little, with *what faith* this is to be done. "*Must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*"

The fact of the Divine existence must be assumed by the seeker for permanent good. What a condition it were to be looking round and afar into boundless inanity in quest of it! uttering the importunate and plaintive cry, "*Who will show us any good?*"—directed first to poor fellow mortals, who can only respond in the same words; and then to the fantastic, shadowy creatures of imagination—nature, fortune, chance, good genii.

"*Must believe that he is.*" Must have a most absolute conviction that there is one Being infinitely unlike and superior to all others; the sole Self-existent, All-comprehending, and All-powerful; a reality in such a sense that all other things are but precarious modes of being, subsisting simply in virtue of his will;—must pass through and beyond the sphere of sense, to have a spiritual sight of "*Him that is invisible;*" and, more than merely a principle held in the understanding, must verify the solemn reality in a vitally pervading sentiment of the soul.

And what a glory of intellect and faith thus to possess a truth which is the sun in our mental sphere, the supreme itself of all lights, and whence radiate all the illuminations and felicities that can bless the rational creation! And what a casting down from heaven, as it may well be named,—what a spectacle of debasement and desolation is presented to us, when we behold the frightful phenomenon of a rational creature *disbelieving* a God! There are such men, who can look abroad on this amazing universe, and deny there is a supreme intelligent Cause and Director; and if some of these are possessed of extraordinary talent

and knowledge, the fact may show what human reason is capable of, when rejecting, and¹ rejected by, Divine influence; and we may presage the horrible amazement, when that truth respecting which the lights of science and the splendours of the sky have left them in the dark, shall at length suddenly burst on them!

"He that cometh to God must believe that he is." But how easily it may be said, "We have that faith; we never denied or doubted that there is such a Being." Well; but reflect, and ascertain in what degree the general tenor of your feelings, and your habits of life, have been different from what they might have been if you *had* disbelieved or doubted. The expression "*coming to*" him, seems to tell something of a previous *distance*; see, then, what may have been, in a spiritual sense, the distance at which you have lived from him. Has it been the smallest at which a feeble, sinful creature must still necessarily be left, notwithstanding an earnest, persisting effort to approach him; or rather the greatest that a mere notional acknowledgment of his existence would allow? What a wide allowance is that! and what a melancholy condition to have only such a faith concerning the most glorious and beneficent Object, as shall leave us contented to be so far off from him!

This belief cannot bring the soul in effectual approach to God, unless it be a penetrating conviction that the truth so believed is a truth of mightiest import; that, there being a God, we have to do with him every moment; that all will be wrong with us unless this awful reality command and occupy our spirits; that this faith must be the predominating authority over our course through the world, the determining consideration in our volitions and actions. When we say then, that we have this belief, the grave question is, What does it do for us? Are we at a loss to tell what? Can we not verify to ourselves that we have

this belief, in any other way than by repeating that we believe?

The effectual faith in the Divine existence always looks to consequences. In acknowledging each glorious attribute, it regards the aspect which it bears on the worshipper, inferring what will *therefore be* because *that is*. It is not a valid faith in the Divinity, as regarded in any of his attributes, till it excite the solicitous thought, "And what then?" *He is*, as supreme in goodness; and what then? Then, how precious is every assurance from himself that he is accessible to us. Then, is it not the truest insanity in the creation to be careless of his favour? Then, happy they, for ever happy, who obtain that favour, by devoting themselves to seek it. Then, let us instantly and ardently proceed to act on the conviction that he is the "*rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*"

This actuating conviction must be decided and absolute in him that "*cometh to God.*" He must feel positively assured it will not be just the same to him, in the event of things, whether he diligently seek God or not. Without this, there cannot be a motive of force enough to draw or impel him to the spiritual enterprise. His soul will stagnate in a comfortless, hopeless, and almost atheistical inaction; or, with a painful activity of imagination, he may picture forth forms of the good which such a being as the almighty *could* do for him, and then see those visions depart as some vain creations of poetry; or he may try to give to what keeps him afar from God a character of reason and philosophy, by perverted inferences from the unchangeableness of the Divine purposes, or the necessary course of things; or he may pretend a pious dread of presuming to prescribe to the Sovereign Wisdom: all, in effect, terminating in the profane question, "*What profit shall we have if we pray to him?*"

Without the assured belief that something of immense importance is depending on the alternative of rendering or withholding the homage of devout application, all aspiration is repressed, and we are left, as it were, prone on the earth. We are to hold it for certain, that, even though divers events, simply as facts, may be the same in either case, yet something involved in them, and in the effect of the whole series of events, will be infinitely different. In each opportune season for coming to God by supplication, at each repetition of the gracious invitations to do so, at each admonition of conscience, there is a voice which tells him that something most invaluable would, *really would*, be gained by sincere, earnest, and constant application. He should say to himself, I am not to remain inactive, as if just waiting to see what will come to pass, like a man expecting the rain or sunshine which he can do nothing to bring on his meadow or garden. If God be true, there is something to be granted to such application, that *will not* be granted without it. As to the particular order of providential dispensation, I can know nothing of the Divine purposes; but, as to the general scope, I do know perfectly that one thing is in God's determination, namely, *to fulfil his promises*. By a humble, faithful, persevering importunity of prayer in the name of Christ, I have an assured hold upon,—or, by a neglect of it, I let loose from my grasp and hope,—all those things which he has promised to such prayer. I am, then, assured he is the “rewarder,” inasmuch as I know *it will not be all the same to me whether I seek him or not*. And here we may instantly break through all speculative sophistry, by appealing to any man who believes anything of revelation: “Do you really believe that it will not, in the final result, and even in this world too, make a vast difference whether you shall or shall not be habitually, through life, an earnest applicant for the

Divine blessing? Answer this question; answer it to yourself, from your inmost conviction."

Let it be observed here, that, God having indicated by his precepts the way in which, conditionally, he will manifest his goodness to men, that way, as so set forth, must be the best. It is not, therefore, a mere dictate of sovereign authority, but a wise adjustment of the means for men's happiness. His goodness is not greater in his willingness to confer his favours, than in the appointment *how* they shall be conferred; that is, the preceptive rule according to which we are to expect them.

That preceptive rule is conspicuous throughout the Bible. That we should "*seek God*," in the way of unceasing application for his mercies, is inculcated and reiterated in every form of cogent expression. Then we are justly required to believe, confidently, that as this is the very best and only expedient, God will combine the happiness of his servants with their faithful observance of an injunction *intended* for their happiness; that it will be attended by tokens of the Divine complacency; that in keeping the precept there will be "*great reward*." Like Enoch, they will have "*this testimony, that they pleased God*."

"*Must believe that he is the rewarder*." This faith is required in consideration of the intention, (might we presume to say, reverently, the sincerity?) of the heavenly Father in calling men to come to him. "*I have not said, Seek ye me in vain*." To what purpose are they thus required to make his favour the object of their eternal aspiration; to forego all things rather than this; to renounce, for this, everything which it is the perverted tendency of the human soul to prefer; to say, "*Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee?*" Why invited to give their affections, devote their life, and their very existence, to acknowledge their

dependence, and testify their confidence by unceasing petitions, and to strive fervently to obtain a more intimate access to him? Why thus summoned, and trained, and exercised, to a lofty ambition far above the world? Not to frustrate all this labour, not to disappoint them of the felicity to which they continually aspire! They "*must believe that he is a rewarder*;" that he is not thus calling and constraining them up a long, laborious ascent, only that they may behold his glorious throne, come near to his blissful paradise, do him homage at its gate, and then be shut out.

Consider again: it is because there is a Mediator, that sinful men presume, and are authorised, to approach to God, seeking that—no more than that—which the mysterious appointment was made, in Divine Justice and mercy, for the purpose of conferring on them. Then they *must* believe, that this glorious office cannot but be availing to their success. There is a peculiar virtue in such a special, remedial interposition to secure its own infallible efficacy, since it was expressly because the original constitution of our nature had failed, and must remain powerless and hopeless for happiness, that this special and extraordinary one was brought into existence; and an expedient which has been adopted, in the Divine government, to accomplish an end for which all else has been proved incompetent, must have a special and peculiar sufficiency for that end. What has been appointed, in the last resort, in substitution and in remedy of an antecedent economy, because that has failed, must be, by eminence, of a nature not *itself* to fail. It rises up conspicuous and impregnable when all around has sunk in ruin; like some mighty rock brought up into the light, and standing high in immoveable stability, in the rending and subsidence of the ground by earthquake.

They that "*come to God*" in confidence on this new Divine constitution, will find that he, in justice to his

appointment of a Mediator, will grant what is promised and sought in *virtue of it*; in other words, will be a “rewarder” for Christ’s sake. And what is that in which it will be verified to them “*that he is a rewarder?*” For *what* will they have to adore and bless him as such? For the grandest benefits which even He can impart—can impart in doing full justice to the infinite merits of the appointed Redeemer.—An inestimable privilege! that those greatest blessings may be asked for, positively and specifically; whereas the minor benefits are to be requested conditionally, and it is better that the applicants should *not* be certain of obtaining them. It is enough for their faith as to these, that an infinitely wiser judgment than theirs will be exercised in selecting, giving, withholding, adjusting.

But the important admonition, to be repeated here in concluding, is, that all this is for them “*that diligently seek;*” so habitually, importunately, perseveringly, that it shall really, and in good faith, be made the primary concern of our life; so that, while wishes and impulses to *obtain* are incessantly springing and darting from the busy soul in divers directions, there shall still be one predominant impulse directed towards heaven. And, if such representations as we have been looking at be true, think—(it is truly a most striking reflection,)—think what *might* be obtained by all of us, who have them at this hour soliciting our attention, on the supposition that we all should henceforward be earnest applicants to the Sovereign Rewarder. Think of the mighty amount of good, in time and eternity, as our collective wealth; and of the value of every individual share.

We said, “on the supposition;” but why are we to admit a word so ominous? for while, on the one side, it points to a grand sum of good, with an averment of Him who has it to give that it may be ours, it darkly intimates, on the

other, that possibly it *may not*, may never be ours; that we may practically *consent that it shall not*. But *may* we, believing such things all the while, may we really so consent? With such treasure held forth in our view, and for our attainment, by the munificent Benefactor, and seeing some of our companions actually attaining it, can we consent to a melancholy destitution by foregoing it? Consent to forego! And to what is it that such consent would be yielded? Could it be to anything else than a malignant, dire, accursed perversity of our nature? No terms of excretion are too intense for the noxious thing, within our own selves, that stupifies our affections and our will to the madness of telling our God, in effect, that we can do without his rewards, that he may confer them where they are more desired; while we will look on and see others take them all away, content to retain and cherish in their stead that deadly enemy within, which compels us to let them go.

Can we *not* be so content? Then, finally, what we have the most urgent cause to seek Him for is, that He will deliver us from that which keeps us from Him. We have to implore, "O merciful Power! abolish whatever it is that would detain us at a fatal distance from thee: Let the breath of thy Spirit consume the unbelief, the reluctance, the indifference, the world's enchantments, that would fix us under the doom to '*behold thee, but not nigh*.' Apply to these averse or heedless spirits such a blessed compulsion as shall not leave it even possible for us to be within reach of the sovereign good, and yet linger till all be lost."

And if, by unwearied seeking, we obtain this, it will emphatically be a "*reward*," for which all under the sun might be gladly given away.

LECTURE XLIII.

SIN MANIFESTED BY THE LAW.

ROMANS vii. 13.

“That sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.”

In the natural world which we inhabit, there are several grand material elements, constantly presenting themselves to our senses, in their various modes, combinations, and effects. Now, these elements are good and beneficent, adapted to a vast utility, and actually effecting it; that is, essentially and generally so, notwithstanding that disorders and certain special combinations among them are pernicious and destructive.

But, in what we call the *moral* world there is an element which is absolutely, intrinsically, and wholly, and always, *bad*. Its very name, is, with emphasis, EVIL; we call it also *vice, depravity, wickedness*, and, in religious language, it is named SIN,—a name which the world has a great dislike to—partly because it is the name which God gives to the evil. Our calling it an *element* may rightly, perhaps, be excepted against, on the ground that it is not a *substantive*, independent thing, but merely a *result*, an *effect* of the disorder and perversion of the human faculties and passions; we only mean, that it is a mighty and permanent *reality* in the moral world. There is nothing that more certainly, absolutely, constantly does exist; not earth, mountains, rocks, ocean, fire. Its existence is perceived, in some degree, by all mankind, however dull or perverted their

apprehensions. They are aware there is something else than *goodness* in the world. A large proportion of them can perceive its quality, as an evil, when it is exhibited in its most gross and striking forms,—in great crimes,—in flagrant wrongs. But to apprehend, in any due measure, its extreme malignity in its *own nature*, in whatever form it may exist and operate, would seem to be a rare attainment of humanity. A full and perfect apprehension is the attainment of no man on earth. Sin infects the very judgment which is to estimate it.

But, nothing is of more essential interest and necessity than, that there *should* be a clear, deep, comprehensive understanding of the *quality of sin*, and a strong and alarming *impression* of it, because fatal consequences are involved in an insensibility to that quality. For then the evil will have an unresisted power over the man. To dwell here as spirits, surrounded, invaded, penetrated by this element, being at the same time naturally disposed to yield to its operation,—and not to be aware of its quality,—what can this be less than to be liable to its whole deadly effect on the soul? The man not aware what a dreadful serpent he has to deal with,—being easy in its presence, playing with it,—will certainly be stung, poisoned, destroyed.

But, then, *in what way* are men to be apprised of the quality of sin? It may be said, that all men may and must be, through the mere perceptions of common sense, in some general manner, apprised of it, by seeing what dreadful mischief sin does; how it disorders and plagues the world,—destroys happiness,—renders men "*hateful and hating one another*,"—causes, all over the world, an outcry of wrong and suffering. And, certainly, this *is* an inevitable instruction. They cannot but say, "*an enemy hath done this*." But this will give them but a crude and limited apprehension of sin. There would be wanting still a Revealer of the

dark depth of the evil. The grand effectual mean is signified in the text: "*by the commandment.*"

It is the *Divine Law*, amply and spiritually apprehended, that must expose the malignity of sin,—displaying the essential nature and principle of "*that abominable thing,*" (to make the true devil stand confest,) while it names or defines, generally and in detail, the things that are sin,—the practical forms which it takes in doing its mischief among the creatures of God. *The law of God*:—We cannot conceive of the sovereign Creator and Governor of the world as not appointing a law to his intelligent creatures: that he should be what the Epicureans accounted of their gods, perfectly careless about the world, and what may be done in it. As the Maker of creatures who are to be wholly and for ever dependent on him, he must necessarily have them under his sovereign authority. He must, also, necessarily, have a *will* with respect to the state of the dispositions, and the order of the actions, of his intelligent creatures. And, he must perfectly *know what is right* for them. He would therefore, as at once the Supreme Authority and the Infallible Intelligence, prescribe to his creatures a *Law*, of injunction and prohibition. He would do so, except on one supposition, namely, that he had willed to constitute his rational creatures such, that they must necessarily, always be disposed, and always act, *right*,—by the infallible propensity of their nature,—by their own unalterable, eternal choice; so that there could be no possibility of their going wrong, from either inclination or mistake. In that case, there would be no need, perhaps, of a formal law; a constitution so essentially and unalienably conformed to the Divine will might have been its own law. But the Almighty did *not* so constitute any natures that we know any thing of. Even angels could err and fall. It is proved by fact, that they were constituted under a possi-

bility of choosing wrong. Therefore a law is appointed,—a grand rule of discrimination and obligation. And, as to the quality and extent of that law, proceeding from a perfectly holy Being, it could not do less than prescribe a perfect holiness in all things. Think of the absurdity there is in the idea that its requirements should be less than perfect holiness. For, that *less*,—what would it be? What would or could the *remainder* be *after* holiness up to a certain point, and stopping there? It must be *not* holiness, just so far. *Not* holiness? and what must it be then? What *could* it be, but something *unholy*, wrong, sinful? Thus, a law, not requiring *perfect* rectitude, would, *so far*, give an allowance, a *sanction*, to what is evil,—to *sin*. And from HIM, who is perfectly and infinitely holy!—an utter absurdity to conceive!

And again, a law from such an Author will not, and cannot, reduce and accommodate itself to an imperfect, fallen, and incapable state, of those on whom it is imposed. Man is sunk into a condition in which it is entirely impossible for him to conform perfectly to a perfect law. What then? Must the supreme and most holy Governor degrade and conform his law to that depraved state; and exacting no more than just what an imperfect, fallen creature can perform,—*allow*, and *sanction*, all the vast amount of *unholiness* beyond? So that a strong indisposition to the right, and disposition to the wrong, should become a clear acquittance? Then would the greatest depravity confer the amplest privilege of exemption. And an intense and perfect aversion to all holiness, as constituting the greatest inability to conform to the Divine Law, would constitute very nearly a perfect innocence; and Satan would be let free from punishment. For it is innocent *not* to do, or be, what the Divine Law does *not* require; and the notion we speak of is, that the Divine Law *does not demand more than the depraved creature can*

perform,—can, in that state of disablement produced by depravity.

Beware, then, of that most pernicious delusion, very popularly taught and entertained, that the law of God *limits* its requirement to the narrow ability of the imperfect, depraved creature.

The economy of *Mercy* is quite another matter. *That* reveals a possibility of *pardon* to the creature's failure of conformity to the Divine Law; but it pardons the *failure as guilt*,—as obligation violated. It does not come as an indulgent excuse for inability. While it absolves the sinner, it pronounces, in solemn terms, the criminality; thus affirming the *entireness* of the obligation, that is, of the undiminished, perfect requirement of the Law.

And look into the sacred volume, and see whether the Law *has* been lowered and accommodated to man's imperfection. Does it resign, in the New Testament itself, any point or particle of an universal jurisdiction? Does the New Testament say, that the compassion of God, manifested through Christ, has been shown in lessening the extent of duty, or in making failure to be no sin? Can we conceive *how* the Law could be more high, and comprehensive, and perfect, even if man were now in a state of perfect rectitude to obey it? Supposing that he had recovered that state, would a higher standard then be proclaimed? Wherein could it be higher? Now, it is this Law, clearly and solemnly manifested and apprehended, that exposes the true quality of sin,—shows it to be exceeding *sinful*—its own name being the worst word that could be found to express its quality. And in this reference, it is most important for us to be profoundly instructed in the Divine Law. Let us often contemplate it, as the irrevocable, unalterable declaration of God's own judgment of good and evil—fixed in light over the world, like the sun in the firmament, the same from

the world's first day to the last; a judgment which he will infallibly enforce, in one manner or other, throughout the Universe; so that either it shall be conformed to by his creatures, or everything unconformed shall incur his displeasure. Let us observe, how peremptory and absolute it is in all its demands; it is not an advice, a pleading, a persuasion,—the *Gospel*, indeed, pleads, persuades,—but the *Law* decisively dictates. What an uniform, consistent spirit pervades it all; it never gives the idea as if the Great Law-giver were in different dispositions, or had different purposes, at different times. With what an *emphasis* it pronounces condemnation,—so strong as to bear the denomination of curses. How wide its comprehension! so that no one at any moment ever can say, “Now here, at this instant, I am under no accountableness to God.” To what specific minuteness it carries its authoritative interference. Look at all the *branchings* of the great precepts. How expressly and formally it asserts its jurisdiction of the *inner* man; it suffers no apartment in the soul to be closed against it—consumes the door, as with lightning, that would shut it out. How high is the nature, the grand principle, of its demands—our Lord's brief comprehensive abstract. How sovereignly *exclusive* it assumes its authority to be; it says, “Whoever shall dare to utter opposing dictates, let him take the consequences.” How *impartially* it extends its jurisdiction to all men; it is “*no respecter of persons.*”

Now, let such apprehensions of the Divine Law be intelligently fixed and habitual in the mind, and accompanied by devotional feeling,—and *then how will sin appear?* What a sad spectacle, when we look abroad over this great world by the light of this Law shining down from heaven, displaying the innumerable deformed shapes of sin! What an awful *retrospect* of all past time! When we behold the Law, as it were, resting upon all past sin; the malediction

remained fixed on it inseparably,—like deeply cut inscriptions on eternal monuments! And what a *prospect*—when we look forward to the *end*, and in that vision behold the holy Law, casting its glare on the assembled account of the sins of all time. When the presence of the Righteous Lawgiver himself shall give new intensity to the force and flame of that Law,—who will then be willing to own his sins?

This Law—if it could suddenly lighten on the minds of the “*fools*” that are making “*a mock at sin*,”—what fearful amazement! The object of their gaiety would instantly change in their sight, and assume a terrifying aspect. The loose, vague, indulgent notions of the evil of sin, which men thoughtlessly entertain in their own favour,—the slight estimates,—the easy palliations,—how would these be exploded and annihilated by a luminous manifestation of that Law! Conscience would rise up, incensed to have been so trifled with and beguiled. There is in the world’s society, a certain conventional standard, a fashionable estimate of sin,—how instantly and violently this would be dashed to the earth, if there were a general manifestation to men’s minds of the sovereign Law! They would be amazed to find what a wretched league they had been in to delude one another and themselves.

What is the testimony given by any individual, who has been a thoughtless, or perhaps self-righteous sinner, when he is stricken and awakened by the Spirit of God,—when the law is arrayed before him, in its holiness, and his sins are brought to his view in the light of that Law? And this is no delusion of affrighted fancy,—no superstitious exaggeration. Even after he has obtained peace of conscience, by the hope of pardon, through faith in Jesus Christ, his sins do not appear extenuated to his view, nor that Law less awfully bright in holiness.

The Law exposes "*the exceeding sinfulness of sin,*" by constraining us to behold it, in some degree, in the same light that God does. It is as if He said, "Place yourselves with ME to look at it,"—as if we were called to approach Him on Sinai. It exposes the sinfulness of it, by declaring what is the *principle of harmony* with infinite excellence,—and showing us how, by sin, that principle is rejected, scorned, violated,—(the sinner practically saying, "I do not care for his love—*let me be an alien and a stranger*")—by making it palpably manifest that sin is absolutely nothing less than rebellion against the Almighty. This is a fact reluctantly acknowledged by sinners, and, indeed, never suspected by many of them; they say, "We have no enmity to God—we do not *wish* to oppose him,—we only *will not obey him!*" But what is *that*?

The law serves to manifest the hateful and dreadful quality of sin in *this* way,—namely,—by giving so definite a model of holiness, in a creature, that it enables us *distinctly to conceive the character realized*,—we can constitute in thought, the holy man—and thus gives us a palpable form of true sanctity, *for direct full contrast with the sinful being.*

The Law operates to the same effect also in *this* way,—namely; it solemnly tells and shows us, that all holiness, all excellence,—is but *merely DUTY, and no more*; thus expelling a notion, very apt to be cherished, that eminent and consummate holiness, supposing it attained, would be something *above* the standard,—something mounting to *supererogation*. According to which notion, sin would appear less flagrantly evil and abominable, being judged of by its distance below a *lower line*, if we may so express it. But, behold the Divine Law making the high superlative line of *perfect* holiness, as that which is *but* the pitch of the creature's duty—but the level of its *proper* state, and then

sin will be beheld in its true and awful distance from *that* line.

There is yet one more way in which the Law contributes to evince the malignant quality of sin : namely,—it irritates into hostile activity the corrupt principles in the soul, somewhat like the case of the demoniacs in the presence of our Lord. These principles might have their dwelling and operation there, in a certain kind of deadly calm, if let alone ; but let their mortal opposite come near them, and then they are provoked to re-action and rage. Rebels left undisturbed may settle into a comparative quiet ; but when the rightful claimant to authority approaches, they instantly rush to arms. Thus the Law brings out sin in its true character,—resisting to be subdued. This is, perhaps, what the apostle means, “ *When the commandment came, sin revived.*”

Again,—it is the Law that denounces the punishment of sin, and *thus* it exposes its true nature and aggravation. It pronounces awful maledictions on transgression. It proclaims, “ Sin,—all sin,—this sin, deserves the wrath of God, and will subject the sinner to the penal infliction—*unless,*” &c. But, at the same time, God is perfectly righteous. Sin, therefore, does, really, deserve what he has threatened in his Law ; therefore, how intensely evil must be the nature of sin !

It will suffice to add one observation more. The Law says nothing of *remission*, of the pardon of sin. Though the Law proceeds from a Being of infinite goodness, that goodness did not introduce into it *mitigations*,—hints of possible suspension of punishment,—suggestions of escape,—“ *a door of hope.*” No ; the *goodness* of God approved that his Law should speak in the strict and exclusive language of *Justice* ; would not, by any intimations of a possible absolution, give ground for a surmise that the Law was too rigid, either in its injunctions or penalties. There

was to be nothing in the Law to allow a dubious estimate of sin. Sin was left to the pure justice of the Law, to be manifested in its "*exceeding sinfulness*."

In all such ways does the Law expose the quality of sin. And thus exposed, how does it appear, in the view of an enlightened and serious mind—a mind recovered from blindness and insensibility? The most dreadful monster in the creation;—as black and horrid as heaven is bright and beautiful—gone forth to work ruin and destruction; a thing in deadly hostility to all goodness and happiness;—a thing which infuses a mortal poison into human souls;—a thing so hateful, that the beings who can love it, and choose it, *deserve* the fearful consequences denounced by the holy Law.

We conclude with an observation or two, to enforce the necessity of having the true quality of sin thus exposed to us. Without it, we shall have but faint apprehensions even of the Divine Holiness. We cannot apprehend it otherwise than in an *emanation from his mind*, made visible in that model which he has exhibited here for his creatures. Without it, we can have no right conception of the state in which sinful beings stand before God. They actually stand before him in the whole guilt and condemnation of every thing in which they have been unconformed to every part of his Law. But unless they are aware of that Law, and how it judges, there can be no acquiescent conviction of their consciences, *approving* the Divine condemnation and judgments. The sentiment will be,—“Why such awfulness of denunciation? Why words that burn? Why does heaven seem to be moved, and earth menaced with destruction?” Without it, there can be no adequate sentiments of humiliation and repentance; self-love will protest against *too much* self-abasement, and ignorance of the Divine Law will support it by making little of the offences. Without

it there can be no right disposition of the soul toward the grand Economy of Mercy,—the appointment of Jesus Christ. The importance and value of the Redeemer's intervention, and of his work altogether, can be but in proportion to the necessity in the condition of man. That necessity consists in the guilt of man, and his condemnation. And it is the Law alone that gives the measure, the greatness of that guilt and condemnation. Therefore, without a knowledge of the Law, there can be no competent understanding or impression of the importance, the nature, the process of *sanctification*,—that is, of obtaining the prevalence, in the heart and the life, of that which God requires and approves; there can be no clear conception maintained of *what that is*, but by habitually looking at the holy model—the Divine authority. Without this, a vast measure of evil may be left undisturbed—even unsuspected. There will be no high aspirings. Without it, we shall not be apprised what manner of conflict we have to maintain, as long as we stay on earth,—not aware that the things to be opposed are so many,—that failure would be so fatal,—that so much aid and strength from Heaven is absolutely indispensable. Without it, in short, we can have no worthy estimate of the magnitude of the whole operative system of Divine Grace, or of any part of it; and no right conception of *the happiness of Heaven*. What can be conceived to be the most essential element of that happiness? Imagine, that, in one spirit placed among the blest, there could be one unholy disposition, of however diminutive a proportion, however profoundly latent,—*what would be the effect?* A principle or an action of the mind, in *contrariety* to the glorious Supreme Spirit, and to the pure and blessed temper of all the society,—what would be the effect? A violent collision and shock,—an intense, intolerable sense of disharmony, of sympathy destroyed,—

of being cut off from the celestial union, and a necessary expulsion from that divine community.

Men in general seem little sensible of the absolute incompatibility of sin with the happiness of heaven. But let them deeply and solemnly meditate the holy LAW;—let them see how it exposes the black and malignant quality of *sin*,—and demonstrates how impossible it is, that with one particle of *that* retained, a soul can unite in the harmony, or enjoy the bliss, of Heaven.

LECTURE XLIV.

NOAH AND THE DELUGE

HEBREWS xi. 7.

“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.”

THE apostle was to inculcate the importance and necessity of faith, that is,—the assured and efficacious belief of things on the divine testimony, these things not being themselves present, in their own evidence, either to the senses or to reason.

Things unseen; some of them unseen because they are of a spiritual nature; some, because far off in past time; some, because yet in futurity. So wide a sphere must that faith extend to, which is yet absolutely essential to religion. These things,—of so grand a compass and variety,—are to be firmly believed, in the simple intellectual sense;—and more than so, they must be “believed with the heart;” so believed, that they shall have their due and commanding influence on the active powers of the soul. This is the required faith; this, from the beginning of the world to the end, is essential to the character of the children of God; a most noble, a sublime power in the human soul,—if it can exist there.

But, if there were not examples, it would seem difficult to conceive that such a power can be there, considering how the soul is enclosed in matter, within the bodily senses, and

thickly and closely surrounded by material objects; continually occupied and affected by present objects and interests; pressed upon by a thousand matters of present good and evil; and in addition, a fatal contentment for it to be so; a perverse, a deplorable indisposition to go out from and beyond this enclosing sphere of present objects, to converse with God, and an unseen world; and to go forward in solemn thought into hereafter. All this considered,—it would seem as if such a faith as that required were something quite beyond the capacity of our nature, and so it is utterly, except by a divine change wrought upon that nature. Great indeed would the difficulty of such a thing appear. It was well, therefore, for the apostle to bring in view a splendid assemblage of examples of this faith; real instances, in which faith has been embodied as a living spectacle; showing its possibility, its power, its manner of operation, its worthiness, and its great reward. And this assemblage (in chapter xi.) contains (with some exceptions, of inferior character) the prime of the ancient world. (Comparison between them and the heroes and demigods of mythology; nay,—the heroes, the sages, and the men celebrated for virtue, in the ancient heathen history.)

Very early in the series appears the patriarch Noah, the second grand progenitor of the human race, a pre-eminently conspicuous object,—inasmuch as the whole human world is seen reduced and contracted down to him and his small family; a very narrow isthmus between a world of men before, and a world after. If but *there* a fatal breach had been made!—If the dart of death had fallen on that one family, in the only inhabited tenement in the world! And, the frailty of mortality, and its surrounding dangers, were there!—A fire might have kindled there; lightning might have struck; a malignant fever might have seized that little household; one of the formidable beasts there might have

broken loose, and the supernatural restraint and spell on its fierce temperament might have been for a moment suspended! There, and thus liable, (but for special divine intervention) was all that existed of man on the earth! but for *which* intervention, the vast scheme of Providence for the subsequent ages had been set aside; the appointment of a Redeemer had been frustrated! There, as in a cradle surrounded with perils, was the infancy of the immense population that has spread over the world.

In this great crisis man was preserved. Our complacency in contemplating this great preservation would have been much greater, if man, in the transition, had left his depravity behind, with the ancient and extinguished race. But that was a radical quality—it faithfully and fatally inherited and accompanied! Millions of deaths, and deaths expressly and specially on its account, could not cause IT to die. It lurked in the ark itself, infinitely the most fell and direful serpent that was there. Yet the wickedness of man appears to have been more universal and unmingled in the times before the flood. It seems an exclusive expression when the Lord said to Noah, “Thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.” A nearly solitary individual of determined piety and holiness in such a generation, would be in circumstances to need habitual direct communications from heaven.

Among these communications was one which could not, reasonably, surprise the patriarch,—though it would make a most awful impression. He was “warned of God!” The time of the catastrophe was signified to him—one hundred and twenty years before-hand. This, however, would seem to place the event far off (according to men’s calculations of time). There was now the trial of the patriarch’s faith. Would the Almighty really make a vast blank in his creation? Was the declaration meant for

more than a mere general expression of his wrath, a menace, to alarm and intimidate? No event the most remotely like this, had ever yet been known in the world. And how, by any possibility, was it to take place? And, as to constructing an enormous vessel, to save himself and all the terrestrial animals, by what means was he to effect any such unparalleled work? (A vessel of burden equal to nearly twenty ships of the line.) While attempting it, would not he be assailed by the universal scorn, and at length by the destructive violence, of the wicked multitude? How were all the various animals to be brought to the receptacle, and kept in order there? And, even supposing all this were done, what safety still could there be amidst such a dreadful commotion and confusion of the elements? in such a breaking up of the whole order of nature? Then, is not this apparent revelation from God a visionary fancy, a gloomy delusion?

So might he have mused and questioned with himself. And, certainly, a case so strange and astonishing did require that he should make sure he had the clearest evidence of a divine communication. He did make sure of this. It was evident to him that it was God that had spoken to him, and he believed the declaration. The proper consequence followed; he was "moved with fear," and he set about the work that was commanded him. Believing, simply believing, is the basis of vital faith; but if this be all, it comes to nothing. It avails and suffices no more than if Noah had contented himself with drawing a plan, or shaping a model of the prescribed ark, and perhaps marking the trees that would serve for the timber. To each belief, relative to important concerns, there is some appropriate affection or passion: and the belief must bring that into exercise. Noah's belief excited his "fear." And, in concerns involving practice, there is an action appropriate to

each belief and corresponding emotion, he “prepared an ark.” With this mechanical employment, we are told he combined the “preaching of righteousness” to that wicked and abandoned generation.

“While the ark was preparing.” And this mere glimpse of information is all that is given us, of more than a century preceding the most memorable event, except one, of all time; an interval too, during which, doubtless, every thing was in undeviating, unsuspended progress toward the catastrophe. It will often occur to us, in reading of the great events in the sacred history,—how little the divine wisdom judged it necessary for us to know of things which it would have been inexpressibly interesting to know. For instance,—in what manner Noah’s announcement of the divine prediction was received; in what measure and manner he was assisted in his mighty labour by the people,—and with what feeling, on their part. Think of the persons employed asking and receiving from him precise directions, about one part and another, with explanations respecting the purpose of it—and all this in the mere temper of workmen! Again,—whether the ark, in its construction, was regarded with absolute indifference, (except as an object of scorn,) or, whether it did strike any or them as an ominous spectacle. To the generality, no doubt it afforded endless amusement in their conversations. Whether there were not designs formed and attempted to destroy it, and if so,—whether they were frustrated by sudden strokes of divine vengeance. (A fire from heaven on some profane and daring incendiary.) What might be the strain of Noah’s addresses to the people; whether, in rebuking their wickedness, he was authorised to enlarge on offers and promises of mercy to repentance; whether the denunciations of the Almighty were by any means made known to the entire population of the earth; whether his

admonitions ceased, or changed their language, when the ark was coming very near its completion. And our imagination will represent his mingled and profound emotions at seeing thus combined in the same fact the assurance of his safety and of their destruction;—his feelings in placing the last timbers on the structure, and in being perhaps assisted to do it by some of these doomed hands; and looking down from the elevation on numbers gazing with idle curiosity and impious mockery, anticipating with what other feelings and language, ere long, surrounding multitudes would look at this structure, closed and inaccessible!

In looking abroad over the region, while the last beams and planks were in adjusting, he would feel that, in effect, he was preparing the whole earth for one grave of all its inhabitants;—that heaven was arraying him as to be the mournful high priest at a stupendous sacrifice, in which all that had the breath of life was to be offered—at once;—that the time was at hand when, at every breathing of his own, he should be sensible that countless numbers were in the agony of suffocation; and that yet a little while, and he would find himself in the midst of a silent and solitary world!

But, all this while, perhaps nothing unusual was taking place,—there were no portentous signs, or extraordinary movements. When all was completed, in the structure and the stores, there might be a short interval of inconceivable suspense and expectation. Imagine the emotion at the first decisive indication! Suppose this to be, the voluntary approach and entrance into the ark of a pair of animals, of a species timidly averse, or destructively hostile, to man,—coming without the least appearance of fear or ferocity. The shock of an earthquake would not have produced a more powerful sensation than such a first circumstance. Infallible sign that the decree of heaven had not been

revoked, and was on the very point of being executed!—And this would be followed rapidly, no doubt, by the various animals crowding to the grand receptacle, moved to do so by a supernatural impulse. “They shall come to thee into the ark.” This must have been, to the most hardened unbelievers and scoffers, a portentous sight.

But still, all the land continued dry, as usual. When, and whence, was the water to come? This would be a matter of most fearful inquisitiveness and expectation to the inhabitants of the ark. The intensity of this inquiring expectation would prepare them to behold, at length, with an awful emotion, the heavens blackening, over the world, and a rain,—preternatural, perhaps, in its quantity,—and evidently so, after a while, by its unremitting continuance.

Then was the time for all mankind to be “moved with fear,”—but for Noah to fear no longer. Observe, that fear, entertained effectually at the earlier season, prevents it at the later. The salutary fear of God, of his displeasure, of his future judgment, seriously admitted and acted upon, at his first “warnings,”—and especially in early life,—what is its consequence, at later seasons, when calamities come, when the end of life approaches? And, on the contrary, what is the consequence at last of the early and persevering rejection of that fear, in thoughtlessness or scorn? How many examples are there at all times, that are analogous to those of Noah and the impious multitude,—especially analogous to the latter!

“The waters prevailed upon the earth;” overwhelmed all the lower tracts—with all the inhabitants that could not escape thence, and gradually rose upon the eminences. But as to the question, in what manner this was accomplished, we are lost in the profoundest mystery. “Whence could this stupendous accession of water come, and whither return?” is a question which philosophy has in vain tried to

answer;—to answer, that is to say, by anything more than mere conjectural speculation. And the only probable conjecture seems to be, that “the great deep” spoken of, the fountains of which were “broken up,” is to be understood as a vast reservoir within the globe,—and that this water was made to gush out, in mighty eruptions, through the surface, either by an immediate efficacy of the Divine will, or, much more probably, by the effect of some law of nature extraordinarily applied by Him. This seems the only conjecture that affords any rational, or even conceivable notion, of whence such an enormous mass of water could come, and whither retire.

Any actual proof, on the subject, must be utterly beyond the reach of science; and He that knows the whole cause and process has not chosen to inform us. But, at the same time, besides universal tradition,—there is demonstrative proof of the fact of such a deluge, confirmatory of the sacred history. This evidence is becoming more palpable every year, latterly, through the researches and inferences of science. There are found, throughout Europe, in Asia and America, and in all parts of the world where the contents of the earth have been explored, both in lower grounds and far up toward the highest, innumerable animal remains (bones, whole skeletons, &c.) in such circumstances as to prove, most evidently, that they were deposited and covered there by an overwhelming flood—with a striking similarity to show that it must have been the same flood, and circumstances indicating there had been but one such flood. We are to set out of view here those animal remains that are found far in the solid depths of the earth, in the state of stones, or in the substance of rocks. These our Christian naturalists are now feeling themselves compelled to refer to some far more ancient period, probably long ages before the globe was made the habitation of man.

But return to Noah—and think how solemn a moment *that* would be, when the ark was perceived to have left the ground! the decided rending of his tie with the world, with all humanity, with the old accustomed economy under which he had lived more than half a thousand years! The world, and all that was on its ample surface, was gone—for him; the dwellings, the plantations, the people he would see no more! He was committed wholly to a Sovereign Providence. Ideas of various, altogether new, and almost infinite hazards, would occur to his mind. But it was enough that he had obeyed the Almighty, and was sure of his care. And—if we may be allowed such an expression—there was a concentration of the cares of Providence on the inhabitants of the ark, since all the other inhabitants of the earth were surrendered to destruction. There converged thither, at that crisis, the providential care which was again to expand with the extension of the human and other races over the now desolated earth.

But, think of the awful scene from which Noah was thus borne aloft! For a while, at the beginning, he would hear the sound of it; the cries of terror and despair from the multitude; his own name loudly called upon by voices imploring to be admitted. How ardently desirous then to share the lot of the man whom they had scorned, and whose God they had defied! But, the door was not his to open; God had closed it. “God shut him in.” On some tracts of the earth it is probable that the destruction was comparatively sudden. For, on the supposition of the impetuous breaking forth, through wide openings, from an abyss below, there would be most tremendous torrents which would drive and sweep with inconceivable violence. And it has recently been shown and illustrated in a most striking manner, that there were such torrents—streams of such amazing force as to tear mountain ridges asunder, and

drive rocks a vast distance along with them. All would soon be over, as to living existence, in the tracts within the immediate power of such tremendous eruptions and torrents. But many of the great elevations would remain many weeks, and some of them even months, high above the flood,—and so would afford ground to multitudes of the doomed and despairing people who could escape thither. But think of them! seeing, day after day, the dire enemy still rising,—still approaching,—and the while, many of them perishing with famine! And, it were not in the least an improbable imagination, that in many instances there might break out among them a deadly and infernal frenzy, in which they set upon and destroyed one another—and the survivors devoured the dead. We imperfectly remember expressing some such idea in a former instance; there is not the least extravagance in it; it is true to the nature of man, social man, when wicked and reduced to extremity. Within this month there has been published an account from Para of a horrible example. The antediluvian world had been “filled with violence,” we are told; and there was nothing to extinguish that spirit on the last summits on which men continued alive. We may well believe, that depravity so extreme as to bring an universal destruction from the Righteous Governor, would continue depravity to the last; and that the final spark of life might go out in fury!

At length there was the entire surface of the solid globe *without sin!*—But to think that it could not be so but by being *without men!* When all was accomplished, the sovereign dictate repressed the flood, and gradually sent its tumultuous waters to the dark hiding place from which he had called them. The ark (in a place probably far off from where it had been built) touched the ground once more, and Noah and his family had to reflect what had been done since it had last touched the ground!—after a confinement of a

complete year, he was summoned to come forth, with all the beings of which he had been made the guardian so long. When he was delivered from the incessant, complicated cares and toils of this great charge, his thoughts would be more free to expatiate in solemn meditation.

Where was all he had been accustomed to behold, for six hundred years, and that was around him the last year at this time? The numbers of men—the towns—the camps—the arts, the works, the revels, the crimes,—the very face of nature itself?—All swept from the creation! A deserted, desolate planet that *had* been populous in God's creation! Nothing short of having gone to another world could be so strange.

And for *SIN* this mighty destruction had passed over the world! How he would deprecate the return of this dreadful cause with the renewed population, on the new face of the earth! “As *man* has expired, oh that *sin* also might be dead!”

And what an awful sentiment he would feel toward the righteous Governor,—at such a demonstration that He will be righteous, at whatever cost to any rebellious and unholy part of his creation,—that there shall be holiness, or there must be vengeance! And again, Noah might feel a grateful wonder why he, with his family, should have been the one to be divinely preserved from the wickedness of mankind, in order to be saved from their destruction, and to be made the origin of a new race. Would he assume it as a ground of pride?—He did well to begin by “building an altar to the Lord,” and offering devout sacrifices. But the ark—would not that be to him, as long as it remained undecayed, a favourite and peculiarly solemn temple in which to adore the Almighty? It had been built in holy “fear;” it had been built in “faith;” it had answered to his faith; had fulfilled the promise; had been the effectual medium of his

temporal salvation. Every sight of it would renew the admonition and conviction that God is true,—both in his threatenings and his promises. And,—since his was not a faith of merely temporal reference, but extended to the concern of an infinitely greater salvation, the ark would be a most striking emblem to him of that grand and sole appointed expedient for the exemption of the soul from a more awful destruction—the “manifestation of the Son of God in the flesh.”

To this sovereign refuge was he also “moved by fear;” fear of a danger transcendently more dreadful than any that could fall from the tempestuous skies, or ascend from “the fountains of the great deep.” And *our* only effectual faith is that in which, “moved by fear,” we hasten to HIM that is all-sufficient to save, with all the solemn earnestness with which the patriarch applied himself to prepare the ark.

LECTURE XLV.

CHRIST, THOUGH INVISIBLE, THE OBJECT OF
DEVOUT AFFECTION

1 PETER i. 8.

“Whom having not seen ye love ; in whom though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

It is familiar to all experience and observation how much the action of our spiritual nature is dependent on the senses ; especially how much the power of objects to interest the affections depends on their being objects of sight. The affections often seem reluctant to admit objects to their internal communion except through the avenues of the senses. The objects must be, as it were, authenticated by the senses, must first occupy and please them,—or they are regarded by the inner faculties as something strange, foreign, out of our sympathies,—or unreal.

Sometimes a philosophic spirit, proudly aspiring to a refined power of abstraction and speculation, is indignant that it should be so dependent for its objects of interest, and its emotions, on the senses. It earnestly essays to create, as it were, within itself, an order of realities of its own. A Christian mind also, from a far better principle, is often grieved and indignant that the objects of the senses so much more readily obtain favour and power within it, than the objects of its intellectual apprehension ; that it is so much more easy to walk by sight than by faith. And

it is a worthy and noble strife of a Christian spirit to attain a more vital and affecting communion with things invisible.

At the same time, it is of necessity that we must yield in a measure to the effect of the constitution of our nature. By that constitution, the objects of sense,—the things especially that are seen, have some evident and important advantages for engaging our affections, over the other class of objects. Let us specify a few. The objects which we can see, give a more positive and direct impression of reality; there can be no dubious surmise whether they exist or not. The sense of their presence is more absolute. When an object is seen before me, or beside me, I am instantly in all the relations of being present; I cannot feel and act as if no such object were there; I cannot by an act of my mind put it away from me. Objects seen,—may have very striking qualities simply as objects of sight; they may have visible splendour, or beauty, which strike and please independently of any thinking. Here therefore is a class of qualities of great power to interest us, which the objects of mere belief, of faith, have nothing to set against.

Again, the good or evil, pleasure or grievance, which the visible objects cause to us, are often immediate; they are now; without any anticipation I am pleased, benefited, or perhaps distressed. Whereas the objects of faith can be regarded as to have their effect upon us in futurity. They have really very much of this prospective character; but we thoughtlessly make it much more exclusively such than it is.

Visible objects, when they have been seen, can be clearly kept in mind in absence;—during long periods,—at the greatest distance. We can revert to the time when they were seen. We can have a lively image; seem to be looking at it still. But the great objects of faith having never been seen, the mind has no express type to revert to.

The idea of them is to be still again and again formed anew ; fluctuates and varies ;—is brighter and dimmer ;—alternates as between substance and shadow.

With visible objects, (speaking of intelligent beings,) we can have a sensible and definite communication. We are evidently in one another's society ; look and are looked upon ; speak and are heard and answered ; it is a positive reciprocation, and each feels that it is so. Invisible beings do not afford us this perfect sense of communication. We may think that we are seen and heard, but there are no signs of recognition.

With visible beings (that is, with *human* beings) we have the sense of equality, of one kind ; we are of the same nature and economy ; in the same general condition of humanity and mortality. But as to the unseen existences, we are altogether out of their order. There is an unlikeness and a disparity immeasurable and unknown. We know not the manner of their dwelling in the creation ; in what manner they may be near us ; what their perceptions and estimates of us may be ; what intelligence, what powers they possess ; and we have no power which can affect them ; we cannot benefit or hurt them ; they are totally separate and infinitely independent.

With the visible beings, again, we can have a certain sense of appropriation ; can obtain an interest in them which they will acknowledge. What they are is partly for me, partly mine, "this is my relative ; this is my friend, my benefactor ;" or, "this has a kind regard for me, as being his friend, benefactor," &c. But the invisible beings ! they have a high relationship of their own !—They stand aloof, and far outside of the circle within which we could comprehend what we can call ours. What could we do to arrest their sympathies ? We have nothing to offer to draw them into the bands of friendship ? They are not to be for our

sakes imprisoned in this dark, and mortal, and sinful corner of the creation.

We want some good from objects, whether seen or invisible. And the object,—the person—seen, is presented to us under this advantage, while we are looking for the benefit from him, that we can perceive him performing or preparing the good for us. We hear him promise; see him take measures; observe him active. We see that he aims, devises, exerts his power,—see how there is a process to accomplish the good we wish. But if an invisible agent is to employ himself for our welfare, it is by an unseen process and means. We must wait and expect, receiving no palpable intimation; perceiving no distinct action, no reply to inquiry, no assurance as to time, no certification,—except through faith—that the unseen benefactor has not turned all his attention away to another part of the universe.

Such are some of the advantages of converse with objects that are seen, over that with the invisible. And, in this view, taken exclusively, it was a high privilege that was enjoyed by those who saw and conversed with our Lord on earth. “Behold the Lamb of God!” “We have seen with our eyes, and our hands have handled of the word of life.” It may have often occurred to most persons to imagine what a signal advantage that must have been; especially in the point of feeling the affections irresistibly drawn and devoted to him. To have been personally in the presence, the society of a being believed to be the Saviour of the world; to have reflected, “here, in this visible form, are embodied the mercy, the sanctity, the wisdom, and the power, of heaven!” To have looked on his countenance to descry some mystic characters, intimating the indwelling glory! To have met the rays of divine benignity in his look, and have felt as if they shed light and life into the soul! To have heard him pronounce revelations of truth

which the reason of mortals could never reach, intermingled with every sign of gentleness, compassion, and yet authority! To have been present at many of his mighty operations of power and mercy! To have witnessed the last affecting and amazing scenes of his presence on earth! The persuasion is, that there must have been irresistible captivation; that every source of affection in the soul would have been opened, and the heart devoted to such an object for ever! In a manner parallel, though so inferior in degree, a powerful influence on the affections and passions may be imagined as inevitable, if we could have beheld the most illustrious of the prophets or apostles, as Moses, Elijah, Daniel, Paul. And, on the view of the matter thus far, we might be apt to feel, as if an immense advantage had been lost to us, for the means of commanding our affections to the best object, in our not having seen, and not being permitted to see, the personal manifestation of Christ.

But this is only one side of the subject. Look a moment at the other. And we need not fear to assert,—that, on the whole, it is a high advantage *not* to have seen Jesus Christ; an advantage in favour of the affections claimed to be devoted to him.

We need not dwell on the possibility of feeling a great interest in objects we have never beheld. Recollect what a measure of sentiment, of affection in its various modes, has been given to the illustrious personages of history; the glowing admiration in contemplating, as there displayed, heroes, deliverers of their country, avengers of oppression, and men of transcendent intellectual power. A softer emotion, but a warm one, has been excited at the view,—the imaginary sight,—of the examples of consummate virtue, such as was not displayed in tumult and conflict; philanthropists, who exhausted their lives in alleviating distress;

men of inflexible conscience and integrity, even to the death; examples of suffering innocence, persons of signal piety, who lived as on the verge of heaven,—and had not, in spirit, far to go when they died. Think! what a captivation you have felt in beholding them, in thought; how the spirit has struggled, as it were, to place itself in their company! Nay, the mere imaginary beings of poetry and fiction have often laid mighty hold of the heart. It has accepted them as affecting realities, despite of the understanding, which knew they never existed, which hardly believed that such things could exist; and some of them will retain their place and favour in the mind as long as we live. All this shows the possibility of giving an animated affection to objects that never appeared to us in visible reality.

But, there is a nobler manifestation of this possibility. Think of all the affection of human hearts that has been given to the Saviour of the world, since he withdrew his visible presence from it! He has appeared to no eye of man since the apostles; but millions have loved him, with a fervency which nothing could extinguish, in life or death. Think of the great “army” of those who have suffered death for this love, and have cherished it in death! And a mightier number still would have died for it, and with it, if summoned to do so. Think of all those who, in the incitement and inspiration of this love, have indefatigably laboured to promote the glory of its great object! And the innumerable multitude of those who, though less prominently distinguished, have felt this sacred sentiment living in the soul, as the principle of its best life, and the source of all its immortal hopes! This is a splendid fact in the history of our race, a glorious exception to the vast and fatal expenditure of human affection on unworthy and merely visible things. So grand a tribute of the soul

has been redeemed to be given to the Redeemer, though an object unseen !

And we still assert, that it is to the advantage of the affection of his disciples toward him that they see him not. It may be recollected, that a special benediction is pronounced by our Lord himself, on the faith that operates to produce this love. "Blessed are they that have *not* seen, and yet have believed." But, more than this ; revert, in thought, to the personal manifestation of our Lord on earth, —and consider how it would act on the believing spectator's mind. Sublime greatness would, must, by an inevitable law of human feeling, be reduced, shaded, diminished, as to its impression on the mind, by being shrouded and presented in a mere human form. Even when the intellect recognized a superhuman glory dwelling there ("the fulness of the God-head bodily"), there is yet such an obstinate control of the senses over the mind's apprehension, that the sight of a mere common human form would, absolutely, in a degree, contract, depress, and prostrate, that apprehension. Has it not struck your thoughts, that, to observe the shape, features, limbs, and ordinary action, of that form, must have made an impression which would be in counteraction to the impressions of majesty ?

Consider also, that, in beholding a glorious and divine nature in such a manifestation, the affection of those devoted to him would fix very much, often chiefly, on the mere human quality of the being before them, and therefore, would be familiarized, shall we say vulgarized, down to that proportion ; it might be most warm and cordial, but not elevated and awful. And, in fact, our Lord had sometimes to admonish and deter his affectionate friends from an assumption inconsiderately ventured by them on the ground of his humiliated appearance. And they appear sometimes in a perplexity of feeling between his plain, humble

humanity, and that mysterious glory which at intervals lightened upon them from within. Perhaps the chief design of the transfiguration was to correct and raise their low ideas of him.

Consider besides, that, under the full direct impression of sight, there would be a great restriction on faith, acting in the way of imagination. The mind does not know how to expand into splendid ideal conception upon an object presented close, and plain, and familiar, to sight.

Should not such considerations make it evident, that to see the Messiah in his personal manifestation, was a mode of contemplating him very inferior, for the excitement of the sublimer kind of affection, to that which we have to exercise by faith? It is true, that to those who regard him as nothing more than a man, all this will appear impertinent and fantastic. But those who solemnly believe their salvation to depend on his being infinitely more, will feel the importance of all that gives scope to their faculties for magnifying the idea of their Redeemer. This scope is the greater for our "not having seen;" since,—our conceptions are not reduced and confined down to a precise image of human personality,—a particular, individual, graphical form, which would be always present to the mind's eye, in every meditation on the exalted Redeemer.

We have no exact and invariable image, placing him before us as a person that we know; exhibiting him in the mere ordinary predicament of humanity. It does invincibly appear to me, that this would be a depressive circumstance in solemn and elevated contemplations. We are not informed how this circumstance *did* operate in the minds of the apostles, who had seen him. It would have been interesting to know in what manner, and with what effect, the precise and familiar image mingled with their lofty and magnificent thoughts of him. But it is clearly better to be

left, as we are, to an indistinct and shadowy conception of the person of our Saviour as seen on earth. For, thus we can, with somewhat the more facility, give our thoughts an unlimited enlargement in contemplating his sublime character and nature. Thus, also, we are left at greater freedom in the effort to form some grand, though glimmering, idea of him as possessing a glorious body, assumed after his victory over death. Our freedom of thought is the more entire for arraying the exalted Mediator in every glory which speculation, imagination, devotion, can combine, to shadow forth the magnificence of such an adored object.

Do not let it seem as if such a train of thought were like being ashamed of the humiliation of our Lord. We cannot be ashamed to see our humble nature so honoured as by his assuming even its inferior part. We cannot be ashamed to see such an illustration of the value set on our souls, as that he, the Judge of their value, would descend from heaven to assume a body to redeem them.

But it is important that our conceptions of him should but little rest on the level, if we may so speak, of his state of humiliation. In the scriptures, besides the doctrine of his divinity, there is much in the character of the imagery by which he is represented, to demand an elevation in our ideas of his personal glory. For example, the manner in which he appears in the visions of Daniel; the fact of the transfiguration; the overpowering lustre in his manifestation to St. Paul; and the transcendent images in the visions of St. John. It is clearly intended that our predominant idea should not be humble and familiar. And we must think that, in this respect, there is a very serious fault,—an unintentional impiety,—in many of our popular devotional writings, even in such as are designed and used for public worship. Such, we think, is the advantage, to later Christians, of not having seen their Lord in a mortal form.

The text may suggest to us an additional idea, which it could not to those to whom the apostle wrote. We not only have not seen him, but we live very long after the time in which he could be seen; we, therefore, in endeavouring to form a sublime conception of him, can add, and accumulate upon the idea, all the glory that has arisen to him from the progress of his cause in the world ever since. So many mighty interpositions;—conquests gained;—strongholds of darkness demolished;—such a multitude of sinful immortal spirits redeemed,—devoted to him on earth, and now triumphing with him in heaven;—all this is become an added radiance around the idea of Him!

Such is the object of Christian faith. As such an exalted being, he is to be believed on unseen. “In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing,”—that is, holding a most firm assurance that such he is, and regarding him with an earnest interest as such a Redeemer. And then, an inseparable result or associate of that faith, is to “love” him, though unseen; to give the soul’s affection to him; to think of him with complacency and gratitude; to think of him as what it were death to want; to devote the soul to him as possessing the supreme excellence that deserves this devotion, and as having done that for us that demands it.

And then, finally (on which we cannot enlarge), through this faith and love, there will be “joy.” “Ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” Most rationally such believers rejoice, because, so believing and loving, they have a present, direct access to where he maintains, though unseen, the exercise of his mediatorial power. They believe all that is promised by him, and in his name. They have the sense, the assurance, of a sacred union with him, which involves an ultimate participation of his glory and joy. They consider him as actually preparing for them the felicity of another state,—and as conducting and training

them toward it. They can sometimes imagine somewhat of that felicity—and how can they imagine it as to be theirs, and not rejoice?—And, inasmuch as these anticipations are of something unseen, unrealized, and indefinitely great, the “joy” is correspondent; it is “unspeakable,” in this sense, that it is not restricted, not limited to a precise measure, but expansive,—mingled with the sense of mystery. It aspires to be commensurate with unknown possibilities, and so is “unspeakable,” as well as in its emphasis. And the soul of man (if not sunk and stupified in the earth), aspires for ever to a joy having this quality, that is, undefinable, not reducible to exact and competent expression, that goes beyond all assigned limits and calculation.

See in all this, how the joy of Christians—the only persons entitled to rejoice on earth—is both in its sentiment and its causes, combined with, founded upon, *a recognition of Christ*.

And we cannot close without adding one remark, a common and obvious one indeed;—On the supposition of our Lord’s being merely a human person, however exalted in prophetic office, no language expressive of the sentiments and emotions regarding him could be more absurdly extravagant, more unworthy of apostolic seriousness and wisdom, than such expressions as those of the text; to which, nevertheless, there are very, very many, throughout the New Testament that correspond. On this hypothesis, no men ever wrote or spoke in a strain of more inflated fanaticism than they who were commissioned to illuminate the world!

September 30, 1824.

LECTURE XLVI.

THE APOSTOLIC ALTERNATIVE.

PHILIPPIANS i. 21.

"To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

ONE has often wished it were possible to know exactly what kind of sentiment is excited in the minds of persons of various orders, at hearing pronounced some very remarkable sentence of scripture. It is, indeed, but too probable, that in many there may be no distinct excitement of feeling or reflection at all. But we would not willingly suppose this in the case of hearing so eminently remarkable a declaration as this of the Apostle,—so adapted to turn every mind to a reflection on itself. Here we have the Apostle deliberately taking account, in reference to himself, of two things, of the deepest interest to every man,—forming a comparative estimate of life and death, as to the preferableness, to him, of the one or the other. And we can give him full credit when he avows which of them is, in itself, preferable in his esteem and desire.

Now, we may presume that most persons have their comparative estimate of these two things. They have it in settled feeling, if not in deliberate thought. And, with the generality of men, how does that estimate stand? At the very first view of the matter, we have an unfavourable light thrown on it by the evident fact, that men generally have a horror of death. This, indeed we must, in part, set to the account of a mere natural feeling, which the Creator himself has intentionally made instinctive in our constitution.

Insomuch that, if we might suppose a man exercising, for a while, a judgment perfectly cool and abstracted from all passions, and in that judgment deciding that the two things were just equally desirable, no preference due to either, the instinctive feeling would vigorously rise up in preference of life. But this is a vain supposition. Men do not put any such equality of estimate on life and death, as to leave it to the mere instinctive feeling to decide the preference.

Consider a moment in what comparative view men do regard these two things. In what manner would they, (adopting a form of expression in imitation of that of the apostle) declare or confess how they account of the two? Looking at them in their various characters, you can seem to hear what they would say,—one, and another; “*To me to live is—to die is*”—what? Let them, respectively, tell what.

“‘*To me to live*’ (might one say) is—gaiety, vivacity, amusement, delightful sociality, spirited pursuit, animated sublunary hope. ‘*To die*’ would be,—the quenching of all this joy,—to be torn from the only felicity that I know,—to be flung from this pleasant world,—to plunge as into a dark gulf,—to go I know not where, and where I do not *wish* to go.”

“‘*To me to live*’ (might another say) is—the utmost indulgence of all luxury of the senses, passions, appetites, —a revel in the abundance of gratifications, — a variety and change of delights,—a full life in the present moment—and ‘*to-morrow to be as this day and still more abundant.*’ ‘*To die*’ would be, the destruction of all these senses, and all that gratifies them,—to go where all must, to me, be famine and desolation,—to go where, if that religion be true,—I should be tormented in the spirit for having lived wholly to the flesh.”

“‘*To me to live*’ (might another say) is—affluence in

what all are coveting—the proud sense of how much I can call my own,—the means of commanding around me the thousand things I may wish for, and the deference of mankind into the account, to have my mansion, my domain, my obsequious dependants. ‘*To die*’ would be, to have all this seized by others,—to be consigned to a few feet of earth—and for the living, conscious principle to deplore, in vain, that all is lost.”

“‘*To me to live*’ (might another say) is—a vigorous prosecution of my favourite worldly purposes—successful enterprise—competition overcome,—prosperity attained,—with rapidly advancing progress—power, perhaps,—and fame.”

“‘*To die*’—that would be to lose the field of my career—my world,—and what should I have to do or pursue *then*? There is no other region for which my powers have been trained, or where I know of anything on which I could desire to exert them. In the other world I must appear as a stranger to all that are said to be the happy employments there.”

But, we might advert to a very different condition of life, in which it appears divested of these interests and captivations.

“‘*To me to live*’ is—a hard and difficult thing. It is—to endure deprivation, poverty, pain, and disease, and many troubles.” “Well then,” we say, “would you ‘*die*’ in preference?” How often the answer would be “Oh, no, no;—not *die*! *that* would be a still worse thing than all this.” If we ask, “Why so? how so?” sometimes the person can hardly tell. There is a general undefined horror of death; but sometimes there is the power of conscience in the case.

And if, next, we turn our view to the case of men decidedly and grossly wicked, who yet are not able to shake

off the belief in a future judgment and retribution, we see the same effect from the interference of conscience.

“ ‘*To me to live*’ is indeed a course in which my pleasures are sadly poisoned with vexation,—but, at any rate, it is, for so long, an exemption from what I have to expect hereafter. Besides, while I live it is possible I may repent and reform. But, to me—‘*To die*,’—is perdition ! ”

If our attention were directed to an Atheist, whether of the coarser class, or a philosophic speculative one—still we should find the same mighty preference of life to death,—and most justly !

“ ‘*To me to live*’ is,—to have the play of all my senses and faculties,—to take all I can, or dare, of immediate good,—to exult in defiance of what superstition has feigned an Almighty Power,—perhaps to command great attention by my genius and philosophizings. On the contrary, ‘*To die*,’ is to have all this broken up and vanished—consciousness extinct—to become a clod of earth ! Why, I could wish that I had never existed, as then I had not been haunted by a sense of this doom to become nothing ;—not to mention my occasional fears that there may be something infinitely worse.”

We will but add to these exemplifications, the case of those who should entertain the notion of a temporary extinction, annihilation, of the soul—the conscious intelligent principle,—to be in existence again after the resurrection.

“ ‘*To me to live*,’ may be—to be warmed and actuated by many pleasing, and many sublime interests,—all the social benevolent affections,—augmenting knowledge—high contemplation,—service to God—various utility.

“ ‘*To die*’—must be the perfect cessation of all this,—the absolute negation of all good ; and that, too, while this good is actually in possession of many of my human brethren ;—and while I might possibly, have continued in

possession of it many years longer. And this negation of all good to be for an indefinitely long time, perhaps thousands of years, during which an amazing train of wonders will take place, and of good enjoyed. '*To me to die,*' therefore, would plainly be a great loss. And a poor consolation, in expecting it, that I shall myself be so lost as not to be sensible of any loss."

As to the notion itself, with so many scriptures in direct contradiction to it, we need not dwell on its absurdity. The temporary extinction—annihilation of the conscious intelligent principle, or soul! As if a soul annihilated *could* ever exist again! Reduce the soul to non-existence, and can any thing under heaven be clearer than, that whatever soul or spirit shall afterwards be made to exist, must be absolutely a creation, a new being altogether, just as much as Adam was? If it be said that the Almighty can impress on that new spirit, a sense of its having existed before, and a conscience of having been good or evil,—the answer is, we cannot presume to say, that that is impossible to his power, but it would be the most flagrant fallacy in all the creation; and, on the ground of justice, a thing horrid to think of, in the case of such a soul doomed to punishment.

But we return to the Apostle, and in his alternative see a happy contrast to all we have been describing, "*To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*"

And, doubtless it is also the state of every true and faithful disciple of Christ, though he may not always have the full consolatory sense and assurance of it; nor habitually have the same decided preference of death.

"*To me to live—is Christ.*" A bold figure,—showing for one thing, the rapid action of his mind,—a haste to express the main idea; an impatience, as it were, of the intermediate and explanatory expressions.

For another thing,—it shows the mighty magnitude of that object in his esteem. He regarded all the grand truths and interests of religion as centring in *Him*—comprehended in *Him*; insomuch that his very name might stand equivalent to them all. How absurd, if he were not infinitely higher, greater, than a man, a prophet! Think how it would have sounded if, for instance, Elijah, the zealous and heroic advocate of the Old Testament law, when he, at one time, desired to “*die rather than live*,” had recovered to the consideration of his important mission and said, “No; I am willing for my great work’s sake, to live a while longer,—for, *to me to live is Moses*.”

“*To me to live is Christ*.” His chief and immediate reference was to the important service which his prolonged life and apostleship would render to the Christian cause, and especially to the Christian converts, to whom he was writing. Humanly speaking, a few years more of his life might (and in fact did) contribute greatly to the extension and confirmation of the true religion. (Apply this, in its inferior measure, to Christians *now*.) But his thoughts would not turn solely on the benefit he would so impart to others, in the promotion of the cause. He would include,—the happiness which he would, the while, enjoy himself;—the admiring and grateful contemplation of the economy of redemption;—meditation on the personal excellence, and glory, and sublimity, of the Messiah, the Son of God;—an employment of thought on each of the distinct, or distinguishable parts, and truths, of the new religion;—the sense of his own happy interest in this system of redemption;—the experience of its progressive efficacy on his mind and his course of action;—that communion with Christ to which he and all the apostles so often refer with great emphasis of delight;—the hope, the assured prospect of all that was in futurity, for himself, and for the world. All this he had, as

a devoted servant of Christ; and this he would continue to have in living longer. And, what value may we suppose he set upon it? What, in all the world, would he have exchanged it for, even for the space of one month? Supposing him (as we may) naturally of an ambitious character, would he have exchanged it for to have been at the head of the Roman Empire? Supposing him (as we may) of a character to covet the heights and depths of philosophy, and the splendour of eloquence; for all that Athens boasted of these, would he have consented to a temporary exchange? Something incomparably better and nobler in his esteem than all this he had, and was sure he should continue to have, in every portion of his prolonged life. And yet, if he had been permitted to make a choice, simply for his own happiness, he would most gladly have surrendered all this for what he should gain by death! He had to exercise a self-denial, a suppression of his wishes, in submission to his Master's determination (doubtless signified to him by inspiration), that his life should be protracted. With this concentration of animating interests in his soul,—the happiest man, very probably, on the whole face of the earth,—he, nevertheless, deliberately judged, that “*to depart and be with Christ,*” would, as to himself, “*be far better.*” The loss of all this, on earth, would be his “*gain.*” And WHEN “*his gain?*” WHEN “*better?*” In the name of common sense what can the expressions mean, but that to be in the state of “*the dead in Christ,*” of those who “*slept in Jesus,*” would be better *during that very same time* that, otherwise, he would, by his Master's appointment, be living in his service and enjoying all his benedictions? during those very same months and years that it was signified to him that he must submit to stay among the living? What! to be in that space of time in the state, or rather no-state, of annihilation (as to all sense and enjoyment),—was *that*

accounted by him to be "*better*" than such a state of feeling and action as he was in! Truly, a most marvellous encomium of his Master's service,—his Master's beneficence,—his Master's communion! Splendid celebration of the happiness of having the smile of Omnipotence,—revelations of divine truth—the power of working miracles—and of promoting the highest, the eternal interests of mankind,—and that in a way which was to operate to the end of time!

How wise the judgment, too, on another ground,—supposing this fall into insensibility and mental annihilation, from death to the resurrection. At that solemn period the Apostle knew there would be conferred a felicity, often called by him a reward, proportioned to the service rendered on earth to Him who will then be the Judge. Therefore every addition here made to that service will then and there be an augmentation of the reward. And, did ever mortal set a more magnificent value, in anticipation, on that final reward? None ever.

Well then, was it possible that this heroic apostle, ambitious in the noblest sense, could deliberately say, "Let me be in a state of practical annihilation during that space of time in which I might, instead, be rendering to my Lord those continued services which would lead to an inconceivable augmentation of my glory when he shall come?" No! rather, if such a thing might have been permitted, he would have prayed that by a miracle his life might be protracted for centuries longer—"Why is not our life that of Methuselah?" We said—"could he deliberately so decide?" for observe, the Apostle's expression of preferring to die, was not uttered in a crisis of despondency, like that of Elijah, when he felt as in a desperate extremity, and all seemed to be lost as to the good cause; but evidently in a state of the calmest thought, and when he saw that he was

successful in his important mission, and should continue to be so in living to prosecute it. In this state of mind he still said, to leave all this, and "*to be with Christ, is far better,*"—" *to die is gain.*" Every honest reader feels that he means—"better to be with Christ, sensibly so, during the very same time that otherwise I might be living and serving him on earth." To be "*absent from the body,*" was, according to *his* faith, to "*be present with the Lord.*"

The apostle was of the highest order of Christians. But to every real Christian, "*to die is gain.*" This needs not any extended illustration. The sensible *loss* of all the evils of their present state, will itself be an immense "*gain.*" To have escaped out of all the evils belonging to the bodily existence—weakness, pains, sickness, anxious care, imprisonment of the soul;—all sorrows of the mind, and all their causes. The being, if we may express it so, *on the immortal side of death*;—pre-eminently, the perfect deliverance from sin,—every propensity of the animated, active, energetic spirit, pointing only to good,—pure, absolute, unmingled good,—so that an unlimited liberty may be given to all its tendencies—the attainment of immense knowledge, of the most delightful kind;—all of it, *here*, beyond the utmost reach of thought;—the society of happy spirits of the human order—and of the angelic;—some far more bright and direct manifestation of the Divine Being, and of the Mediator;—an intense realization of what has been done and obtained for them by the redeeming mediation;—the joyful and not impatient looking forward to what is to be revealed and conferred at the resurrection.

How mighty the duty, how transcendent the interest, of directing our utmost energy to the object—that death may be "*gain!*"

LECTURE XLVII.

THE AUTUMN AND ITS MORAL ANALOGIES.

ISAIAH lxiv. 6.

"We all do fade as a leaf."

OUR lives have been prolonged to witness once more within the last few weeks, the wide progress of decay over the field of nature. The infinite masses of foliage, which unfolded so beautifully in vegetable life, in the spring, and have adorned our landscape during the summer, have faded, fallen, and perished. We have beheld the "grace of the fashion" of them disclosed, continuing a while bright in the sunshine, and gone for ever. Now our text (with many other passages of the same character) admonishes us not to see the very *leaves* fade, without being reminded that *something else* is also fading; this is a fact more intimately realized to us than any thing in the external world can be, but of which we have a most marvellous faculty, if we may so call it, of being insensible. Is it not so? How many of us can,—or can any of us—say, they have had during the recent season, as distinct and prolonged a reflection on the fact, that our own mortal existence is fading, as we have had a perception of the fading and extinction of vegetable life? It would seem as if the continued pressure of ill health, or the habitual spectacle of sickness and decline in our friends, were necessary in order to keep us reminded of the truth which is expressed in the text.

We should do well to fix our attention awhile on this very pernicious fact, of our inaptitude to feel and reflect

that our mortal condition is fading; and then to note and urge a few of those monitory circumstances which verify this our declining state. Let us look a little at the habits of our feeling, in regard to this matter.

And, first, we are very unapt to recognize the common lot and destiny of all human life,—that it is to fade, and is fading. The vast world of the departed is out of our sight,—even what was the material and visible part. What is constantly in our sight is the world of the living; and we are unapt to think of them as all appointed not to be living. Perhaps it was but very few times in the life of the Persian monarch that he was in so reflective and moral a mood, as when, looking on his innumerable army, he thought, and wept to think, that in less than a century they would all be dead. And in our own case, while we see the countless population, in all the passions and actions of life, it is but now and then, perhaps rather unfrequently, that the reflection, like a solemn shade, comes over us,—“these are all hastening out of sight, tending to dissolution and dust! Such a living scene our ancestors beheld; but where are now both those they looked on and themselves?”—Man as he *is*, fills the attention, and precludes the thought of man as he is appointed and *going to be*.

And we may note a circumstance which aids the deception, namely, that the most decayed and faded portion of the living world is much less in sight than the fresh and vigorous. Think how many infirm, sick, debilitated, languishing, and almost dying persons there are, that are rarely or never out in public view, not met in our streets, roads, or places of resort,—not in our religious assemblies! And then “out of sight, out of mind” in a great degree! Thus we look at the living world so as not to read the destiny written on every forehead, and in this thoughtlessness are the more apt to forget our own.

But, again, we are very prone to forget it, that is, *our own* destiny, even while we do recognize the *general* appointment to fade and vanish. The great general appointment is brought in our view, by many things which we cannot help perceiving. There is no avoiding to observe something of the process of fading. It is obvious that many of our fellow mortals are dying;—that many are pining in sickness, and consuming away under incurable distempers; that many are changing in appearance, withering down, gradually declining in strength, and sinking into infirmity and feebleness. But, nevertheless, we have some unaccountable power and instinct to dissociate ourselves from the general condition and relationship of humanity. “All men think all men mortal but themselves.”—*I* am not hopelessly sick.—*I* am not sinking into feebleness.—*I* am not withering within an inch of the dust.” And this is thoughtlessly suffered to become, in the feeling, or rather insensibility, of the mind, much the same thing as if *I* had no such thing to apprehend;—as if that general lot were not mine!

Have you not been sometimes struck or amazed at this, in observing others, or in self-reflection? How is it (you have said)—how comes it to be possible, that men can see the partakers of their own nature and destiny, withering and falling from the tree of life (so to speak,) and calmly look at them in their fall and in the dust, with hardly one pointed reflection turned on themselves? As if the careless spectator should say, “Well, they must go:—there is no help for them! unfortunate lot! but it is nothing to me, except to pity them for a moment, and be glad that I am under no such disastrous decree?” So little is there of ominous sympathy felt, while men see neighbours, acquaintance, friends, relatives, one by one, fading, falling, and vanishing! It may seem as if they were not

considered as having belonged to the great human fraternity; as if they had not been *exemplifications* of what man is, and is appointed to, to admonish and alarm those who continue to live,—but ill-fated *exceptions* to the common lot, to give the rest an occasion of triumph, that *they* exist under quite a different law; “They were not *of* us, for if they had been *of* us, they would not have gone *from* us.” Or as if each survivor, especially if in health, and not old, believed the antediluvian privilege of longevity had devolved to him, regarding those who have departed as of the frail race of seventy years! And if the actual vanishing of individuals from the grand community is taken so lightly by those who remain, it is no wonder that seeing persons decline and fade into old age and infirmity should have little sympathetic power to remind others of their own frail mortality; at least those who are a stage or two less advanced in life, even though it were but a difference of ten or fifteen years. Thus men are under some kind of spell and beguilement on their feeling which denies them the sense of being involved in the common lot.

It is true, it were absurd to imagine there should on the supposition of the most perfectly rectified and expanded state of human feeling, be such a kind of community-sentiment (so to call it) as if they were almost to feel their own infirmity and decline, in mere sympathy with that of others. But still this self-defensive unconcern, this not being forcibly admonished that our lot is of a piece with the common lot, is an unnatural and irrational state of mind. And pernicious too; are not, for example, young persons all the worse, in point of wisdom, and the right purpose and use of life, from allowing themselves to regard their condition as so entirely disconnected with old age,—so unrelated to it,—as if centuries and centuries had to pass away, before they should become old? Are not those

who are in strong health as if they were on a different planet from those who are feeble or sick? Are not the living, as if it never could be, that *they* should come to be in the state of the dead?

It is but little varying the illustration to observe, that we are apt to regard life much more as a thing that we *positively possess* than as a thing that we are *losing*, and in a train to *cease possessing*. (We are considering life in the sense of the duration of living.) We thoughtlessly permit an imposition on our feelings, as if life were a substantive property, which we possessed years since, and equally now possess. To be alive is the same consciousness *now* as *then*; and so we forget the essentially different condition we are in. Life in the case of a being that should be certainly immortal might be considered as an absolute possession. But with us, life is expenditure: we have it but as continually losing it; we have no use of it, but as continually wasting it. Suppose a man confined in some fortress, under the doom to stay there till his death; and suppose there is there for his use, a dark reservoir of water, to which it is certain none can ever be added. He knows, suppose, that the quantity is not very great; he cannot penetrate to ascertain how much, but it *may* be *very little*. He has drawn from it by means of a fountain a good while already, and draws from it every day;—but how would he feel each time of drawing, and each time of thinking of it? not as if he had a perennial spring to go to; not, “I have a reservoir,—I may be at ease.” No! but, “I had water yesterday;—I have water to-day;—but my having had it, and my having it to-day, is the very cause that I shall *not* have it on some day that is approaching. And at the same time I am compelled to this fatal expenditure!” So of our mortal, transient life! And yet men are very indisposed to admit the plain truth that life is a thing which they are in

no other way possessing, than as necessarily consuming; and that even in this imperfect sense of possession, it becomes every day *less* a possession! Nay, we sometimes see that the longer a man has been in the expenditure of it, the more securely he seems to feel it a property positive, entire, and his own.

With many, the plain testimony of time comes home with far too little force,—time had, and spent, and gone, since their recorded nativity. They have attained the age of forty, fifty, fifty-five, sixty, or more, and yet will not lay it to heart, that they have entered, or gone a great way forward in the latter part of any probable length of life.

It may be observed that some persons, after arriving at the part of life which we call “middle age,” remain a good while but little altered in their feeling of health, in their power of activity, or even in their appearance,—a great privilege!—but if they be not persons of serious reflection, it may be very pernicious to their highest interests. They will allow themselves to feel as if they still belonged to a much earlier stage. They can associate still with the youthful, on somewhat like equal terms. They will consolidate all their worldly habits, and give themselves up to schemes formed for a long time to come. They feel as if they had a fine, long, protracted, summer season, to make the most of life and the world. They reckon, probably, on the utmost term of mortal life, and with great self-complacency, pass by the graves of their departed sickly coevals. Some of these persons retain so much spirit, vivacity, activity, and good appearance, that they are not as yet much haunted with the aversion and dread of being accounted *old*.

But it is obvious to remark, that many persons fading into the decline of life, betray a solicitous reluctance to being considered and classed with the elderly and the old.

They discover, perhaps in spite of some effort, a sensation of chagrin at hearing expressions which directly, or by implication, assign them to the aged class; prematurely assign them they think, or would have it thought; so that it becomes a point of complaisance to beware of using any such expressions in their presence. Some such persons have recourse to expedients, undignified, and at the same time unavailing, for the purpose of keeping their former ground,—as, an ill-judged labour of personal decoration, a style of dress and ornaments perhaps little worthy of intelligence and piety at *any* age; but at any rate inappropriate to any but the more lightsome form and unfaded countenance; a forced, over-acted vivacity, even an attempted rivalry, with not the gaiety only, but the very levity of youth, as if they positively would not be old enough to be grave on any subject;—a resolute addiction to amusements, and what is called company.

Such are some of the characteristics of men's insensibility to the solemn fact that "we all do fade as a leaf." Now this insensibility is partly wilful; for it is partly owing to our indulging a reluctance to perceive and think of the signs and proofs which remind us of the fact that we are fading. Therefore it is highly proper there should be a solemn remonstrance against this perverse indisposition, and an endeavour to press on the attention those circumstances and reflections which are adapted to remind us of the fading, vanishing condition of our mortal existence.* They are in mighty number! If the soul would expand itself, and with a lively sensibility to receive upon it the significance, the glancing intimation, the whispered monition of all things that are adapted to remind it of the fact,

* "How strange and awful is the synthesis of life and death in the gusty winds and falling leaves of an autumnal day!"—COLERIDGE. *Table Talk*, p. 267, 2nd ed. 1836.

—what a host of ideas would strike it! Then we should hardly see a shadow pass,—or a vapour rise,—or a flower fade,—or a leaf fall,—still less a human visage withered in age,—but we should have a thought of the transient continuance of our life. We can only note a few of the things that suggest this instruction.

It would not be foreign to the purpose to reflect how many successive generations of men have faded and vanished since the text itself was written; as many as there have been falls of the leaf since the first autumn which the oldest person among us can remember (at the average duration). Let such a person glance on the long repetition of this great change over the face of the earth,—and think of MAN! And imagine some great spirit to have been an observer of the human race through all this series of ages! within his view the entire multitude gone—once,—and once again,—and still again!

To our view, however, there is a grand circumstance of of deception, with respect to the removal and the renewal of the race. Human beings are continually going and coming, so that, though all die, MAN, in his vast assemblage, is always here. If there were not an essential absurdity in making the supposition that a great majority of the whole race were, at successive periods, to sink in dissolution at once (or such a portion as inhabited any one country), *that* might be imagined an amazingly striking phenomenon to those that remained, to grow into another population. But the order of the world is that men be withdrawn one by one, one here and one there, leaving the mighty mass, to general appearance, still entire. (Except in the case of vast and desolating calamities.) And thus we see nothing parallel to the general autumnal fading of the leaf. More like the *evergreens*, which lose their leaves by individuals, and still maintain their living

foliage,—to the thoughtless spectator, the human race is presented under such a fallacious appearance, as if it always lived.

But a man should have serious consideration enough to look through this deception. An aged person (especially if he has always continued chiefly in one neighbourhood) can verify to himself that he has actually seen one whole distinguishable generation fade and disappear; can recollect who his early acquaintances were around the district, and has seen them gradually go; and now sees that they are nearly all gone,—only himself and a very few others remaining, like the last few faded leaves, lingering and fluttering on a tree. Indeed, if a very old man, he has seen the main substance of two generations vanish. But let those even in very early life consider, that they have seen one and another near them fade and fall; and how many before what we regard as the proper season for fading!

And here another warning suggestion arises; namely, that we allow ourselves to miscalculate the appropriate season for fading. Our imagination places that season in old age. Most delusively! for surely that cannot be taken as the appropriate season, long previously to which the grand majority actually do fade into dissolution. Those who live to quite an advanced old age are so vastly smaller a proportion, that it were most absurd to take them as representative of the human lot, in respect to length of life. The period to be accounted in a general collective calculation, as the proper term of mortality, cannot rightly be placed beyond such a stage in life as a large proportion of men do attain, but not exceed. The comparison with *the leaves* here again fails. The main mass of the foliage of the forest does continue on to the late period which none of it can survive. Not so in the case of human beings. The great majority of them are not appointed to reach what we are

accustomed to regard as the late autumn of life. And therefore young persons are to be earnestly warned against calculating on that as even a probability. They are apt to overlook, in their calculation, all causes of decay and dissolution but that of mere protracted time. But do let them consider how few comparatively are left to the mere wearing out by time! On the field of life there are a thousand things in operation to anticipate time. And these are to be taken into the account, and as forming the far greater part of it, in conjecturing at any probable term for the duration of life. And if these be taken into the account, how very limited is the term of probability! Then let no young persons amuse themselves with flattering lies, and say, "We may *probably* live to the far-off term of eighty!" But some of them may perhaps truly say, "We do not much think about such calculations in any way. It is enough that for the present we are youthful and blooming; there is no fading, nor sign of its approach." Well! so have many felt, and perhaps said, in answer to grave admonitions, who before the next, that is, the recent fall of the leaf, have withered and died! And so before the fading of next autumn will many, many more, now gay and blooming.

But without insisting on these threatening possibilities of premature decline, consider, that to a reflective mind, the constant, inevitable progress *toward* fading would appear very much related to it; to have daily, less and less of that intermediate space which is all that there *can* be between. One has looked sometimes on the flowers of a meadow which the mower's scythe was to invade the next day;—perfect life and beauty as yet,—but to the mind they have seemed already fading, through the anticipation. If we turn to those who are a good way, or quite far advanced in life, *they* can tell how rapidly that vernal season has passed away;—how much it looks in the review like an absolutely preter-

natural fleetness of time. As to their now more advanced period, there are many palpable intimations in their experience to remind them of the truth in the text. Even those who are ranked as the *middle* aged, have much that speaks to them in a serious and warning voice. They are most of them sensible by their consciousness, as well as by the record of years, that one grand season of their terrestrial existence is gone by. Let them think what they feel to be gone;—freshness of life,—vernal prime,—overflowing spirits,—elastic, bounding vigour,—insuppressible activity,—quick, ever-varying emotion,—delightful unfolding of the faculties,—the sense of more and more power of both body and spirit,—the prospect as if life were *entire* before them,—and all overspread with brightness and fair colours! This is gone! and this change is not a little toward the fading. Those poignantly feel it to be so who look back with sadness, or with vain fretfulness, to think it cannot be recalled.

But there are still more decided indications of decay. Some, indeed, as we observed, remain considerably stationary; but, as to the majority, there are circumstances that will not let them forget *whereabouts* they are in life; feelings of positive infirmity;—diminished power of exertion;—grey hairs;—failure of sight;—besetting pains;—apprehensive caution against harm and inconvenience;—often what are called nervous affections;—slight injuries to the body far less easily repaired. All this is a great progress in the fading. And the appearance partakes of and indicates the decline; not so perceptible to the person himself, or to constant associates, but often strikes acquaintance who see one another after long absence.

From this stage there is a very rapid descent toward complete old age, with its accumulated privations and oppressions; general prostration of strength;—often settled

disorders operating with habitual grievance ; loss of memory ; —furrows marking the countenance ;—great suffering by little inconveniences ;—confinement in a great measure to a spot ;—a strange and mighty disseverment, as it were, from the man's own earthly youthful self. In some instances there is a last decline into an utterly withered state of existence ;—imbecility wholly of body and mind. The final point is that of the fallen leaves, to be reduced to dust. And thus in so many ways is the text verified.

It will perhaps, be said, "This is a most gloomy view of human life. Why exhibit it at such width, and darken it with so many aggravations of shade, as if to cloud the little sunshine that glimmers on our lot?" We answer, nothing worth is that sunshine that will not pierce radiantly through this cloud. No complacency, no cheerfulness, no delight, is worth having that cannot be enjoyed *together with* the contemplation of this view of our mortal condition. Such an exhibition—is it truth ? is it fact ? and is it truth and fact irresistibly bearing on our own concern ? Then the endeavour to be escaping from the view and thought of it would be a thing incomparably more gloomy to behold than all that this exhibition presents ; because that would betray the want, the neglect, the rejection of the grand resource against the gloom of our mortal state and destiny.

To an enlightened beholder of mankind, it is not their being all under the doom to fade, be dissolved, and vanish, it is not *that* that strikes him as the deepest gloom of the scene ; no !—but their being thoughtless of this their condition,—their not seeking the true and all-powerful consolation under it ;—their not earnestly looking and aiming toward that glorious state into which they may emerge from this fading and perishing existence. The melancholy thing, by emphasis, is, that beings under such a doom should disregard that grand countervailing economy of the divine

beneficence in which "life and immortality are brought to light,"—in which the Lord of life has himself submitted to the lot of mortals in order to redeem them to the prospect of another life, where there is no fading, decline, or dissolution!

Let us not then, absurdly turn from the view because it is grave and gloomy, but dwell upon it, often and intensely for the great purpose of exciting our spirits to a victory over the vanity of our present condition;—to gain from it, through the aid of the Divine Spirit, a mighty impulse toward a state of ever-living, ever-blooming existence beyond the sky. A man who feels this would accept no substitute consolation against the gloomy character of this mortal life; not the highest health, not the most exuberant spirits,—nor early youth itself, if it were possible for that to be renewed. "No, rather let me fade—let me languish—let me feel that mortality is upon me, and that the terrestrial scene is darkening around me, but with this inspiration of faith and hope—this rising energy—which is already carrying me out of an existence which is all frailty, into one of vigour, and power, and perpetuity!"

1825.

LECTURE XLVIII.

PETER'S DELIVERANCE FROM PRISON.

ACTS xii.

“ Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hand to vex certain of the church,” &c.

ALL devout believers in Revelation rejoice in a confident expectation that this world will, at length, become a place favourable to the servants of God. The view forward is the consolatory and animating one; it is seen occupied, in the distance, with beautiful and glorious imagery. The prophetic light over it is, indeed, somewhat of the nature of twilight; but, the prospect is most unequivocally that of a season, and a long season, in which the saints shall, literally, “*possess the earth*,” and shall have all things in their favour. Through a vast space of past time, there has been only a most diminutive number, on the whole earth, of such as truly knew, and feared and served God. And during periods in which they have been a somewhat more perceptible portion of the race, think how the world has often treated them; as if they were foreigners and intruders, occupying a place to which they had no right. A very considerable portion of the history of the world is a record of the persecutions that have raged against them. Monarchs, with the co-operation of their counsellors, captains, priests, and the ignorant brutish multitude, have even sought to make it a chief distinction and glory of their reigns that they zealously endeavoured the destruction of the saints of the Most High. This, however, has often been a fatal course for the perse-

cutors themselves. The history of the church abounds with instances of Divine judgments, on both states and individuals, for their violence against the people of God.

The kingdom of God on earth is in real, vital, connexion with his kingdom in heaven; so that there is—shall we say?—a sympathy between them; so that, when a saint is smitten on earth, there is, as it were, a sensation conveyed to the upper sky. The Lord of saints and angels says, “*Saul, why persecutest thou me?*” a strange expression of the union of the “*King of Glory*” and his humble mortal friends! The mighty spirits that he has on high, in his service, doubtless, take their share of interest in his kingdom below. Throughout the Scriptures we see them prompt to come down, in aid and in avengement of his oppressed saints.

In the short chapter before us there is an account of the angel of the Lord coming twice—once to deliver Peter.—then to smite Herod. Herod, who, having persecuted the apostles of Christ, filled up the measure of his wickedness by willingly accepting the title of a God from the base courtiers and people. They were worthy to have such a king, and even to share his fate; for what was the way for him to render himself so popular with them, that they should be ready to call him “*a god?*” It was, to kill the Christians. He had killed James, “*and because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also.*” Here was what had been the peculiar people to God, of all the people of the whole earth, sunk to the last barbarous depravity of the pagan nations. The most effectual expedient for the chief of their nation to gratify them was, to give them a show of human victims; especially provided the sufferers were the disciples and advocates of true religion. So it was among the Romans, and other heathen nations. But so, too, has it since been in nations bearing the Christian

name ; as in the horrid spectacles exhibited by the Inquisition. These things "*pleased the people ;*" and their rulers, secular and spiritual, were most forward and liberal in affording them such pleasure,—especially in the way of religious persecution. The malignity of human nature has appeared tenfold malignant, when vented in the direction of hostility to true religion. It has then glared out a fiend, delighting and luxuriating in savage barbarity.

"*Killing James with the sword*" had so captivated the people, that Herod thought he had fallen on the very best method of courting the favour of his subjects. And it was fortunately one which cost no self-denial of his own royal disposition. He could at once "*please*" them and himself, and therefore "*proceeded to take Peter also.*" One flagrant crime facilitates the perpetration of the next. Herod probably issued his command for the apprehension of Peter with as little repugnance as he would have ordered a court-festival. In his recollection of James, no such idea obtruded itself in his mind, as that the martyred apostle had ascended as a "*swift witness*" against him to the throne of Heaven. Whither he might suppose the departed saint did go, we cannot conjecture ; but he thought he might send another the same road without danger of ever hearing of it again, except in the demoniac applauses of his mob.

Peter would be easily found, and taken. He, we may believe, had not absconded from affright at the fate of his fellow apostle. Cowardice in behalf of his Lord had been shown *once* before ; but that was the *last* time. The death of his great Master, and the love manifested toward Peter after he rose again, had devoted Peter to die for him, whenever fidelity to his cause should require the sacrifice. He might even wish that the life which, as a mortal, he must at all events surrender, should have the advantage of being surrendered as an act of testimony, rather than as a mere

passive loss under a natural law. On a sober calculation, the act of dying for Christ might be held equivalent to very many acts of living service. As the death of Samson was, in one single act, a greater achievement for the Israelites than all he had performed during his previous life. The martyrs have, in the history of religion, and in the glories and rewards of heaven, this eminent precedence of the other faithful, that they performed, in dying, a great action, of as much value, probably, in the Divine account, as the zealous labours of many years of life. May we not venture to say, that the man who, at the age of fifty, died a martyr, lived virtually, in the value of service, to the age of sixty or seventy? However, the Great Judge can estimate the proportion right, and accordingly will be his award.

But we return to Peter. He was conveyed to prison. Do we follow him thither with compassion? We can imagine him looking—(if there was a sufficient glimmer of light)—looking round on the walls of his new abode, of impregnable thickness, with strong bars,—a dreary, dismal shade, ominous sounds; and chains on his limbs. “This it is,” he might say, “to be an avowed and faithful servant of Him that died for me.” But what if he said further—“Well I would rather be here and be thus, for such a cause, then be the lord of Herod’s, or of Cæsar’s palace.” And can any one doubt, that if he did feel and say so, he was right? While the body is in a palace, the soul may be in prison; whereas, while his body was in a prison, his soul was as in a palace. And even externally, he was soon to have such attendance there as the dwellers in royal and imperial mansions have not.

There was the most formal precaution, on the part of the tyrant, to secure his intended victim. “*He put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers,*” (four times four,) who took their stations, in arms and

military pride ; but perhaps wondering that so many were thought necessary for such a service. And, indeed, they were either too many, or too few. Peter had a number of affectionate, humble, pious, friends, but peaceful, unarmed, oppressed, and malignantly watched ; for any danger of an insurrection and rescue by them, these guards were pompously *too many* ; but if considered as appointed to resist and overpower *whatever* might come to the prisoner's aid, they were *too few*. There was a recorded instance of an army besetting the dwelling-place of a prophet, and being baffled. There was another example to show that had they, instead of sixteen, been 185,000, they might still be too few. If Herod could have had there even the mighty aggregate of the Roman legions, they would have been too few.

No intercession for Peter with the king appears to have been ventured or thought of. But something else was done,—“*prayer was made without ceasing to God for him* ;” an expedient which would have been held in great contempt by Herod and his men of war, and by the people too. But they who had recourse to it, knew well what they were about. How happy that in all extremities, and when every other expedient is precluded or unavailing, the greatest of all still remains !

Good men are to remember one another in their prayers ; especially when any of them are placed in situations of very difficult duty, or great peril. And peculiarly when any are involved in fearful danger in consequence of their being faithfully devoted to God and religion. (Certain missionaries in the East at this time.) In times of persecution, this affectionate, sympathetic piety has been warmed and exalted to a degree of which *we* can hardly form any conception. And, in not a few instances, there have been remarkable interpositions apparently in consequence of, plainly in connexion with, this intercessory devotion.

But Peter's friends, and himself, had to wait; for days and nights passed on, and nothing unusual occurred. At length the appointed day was just arriving, only one night between, if indeed that night itself was not to have been the time. He had probably no doubt as to his destination; and he might, or might not, be apprised that the appointed time was so immediately at hand. But at all events, he was in great tranquillity,—*slept*, between two soldiers, and in his chains. He felt no restless agitation;—cast no desponding looks at the bars, the fetters, the walls, the guards;—indulged in no desperate imaginations or vain implorings. A man with a good conscience, and wholly resigned to God, may sleep anywhere. Why not? if he has attained the point to be “indifferent in his choice to sleep or die.” In some instances, devout faith has risen so high that the man in peril has been enabled to feel as if the question of his life and death was more God's concern than his own. “If God wants my life for further service, he will preserve it; if *he* does not want it, *I* do not.”

See, now, this man, within the relentless hold of these walls, these irons, these savage and faithful guards—these three strong gates,—under the doom of an inexorable tyrant, who was delighted in anticipating the delight he meant to give to the barbarous multitude. The Christians were both powerless and in quite resignation; with no means, even, of making interest with “*the king's chamberlain*.” Within an hour or two, can this man be walking, perfectly free? How would such a question have sounded to Herod and any of his favourites and idolaters?

“*The angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison.*” How different is such a being, in such a place, from a man! He cares not for a massive structure, if it were built of piled rocks,—cares not for securities of iron,—for guards, for gates. He can pass in and out when

he pleases, can rend, can demolish,—can take away the imprisoned mortal whom he is sent to visit. And he is sure to find whom he is sent to visit. There is no dark recess, no secret dungeon, which his presence will not instantaneously flash into. Let but the commission be given him, and he will infallibly be at the spot where it is to be executed. His entrance to Peter was with no tumult, and ostentation of power. It was so calm and silent that he did not awake. The angel “*smote him on the side,*” and summoned him to rise. But it was a gentle violence. Not so he, or some of his celestial associates, had smitten the furious assailants of Lot—not so the army of Sennacherib—not so he smote Herod. A gentle violence! Methinks an emblem of a death of a Christian; a soft blow, to emancipate him from the prison of mortality,—to summon and raise him to eternal liberty, to the amplitude of heaven!

Peter awaked to gaze on the angelic visitant and disturber. It was worth the sleep of death so to awake! And a good man, sinking in that sleep, does, in his soul, so awake. His agency struck the chains from Peter's hands, as an intensely powerful stroke of lightning might; but *that* would have been destruction to the man so set free; here it was by an innocent and silent force. No time was given for wonder, or questions, or idle triumph, at the amazement and terror of the impotent guards. We, however, feel somewhat of that triumph in viewing the scene. We seem to challenge—“Who will attempt to arrest him, or touch him, now? What hard ferocious martial countenance, will dare even to frown upon him, as he goes out, led by an angel's hand?”

Each expression and movement was that of haste. This character of speed, and prompt execution, attaches to many, to most, of the recorded interventions of these superhuman agents. As if even *they*, that never slumber, and live for

ever, *had no time to lose*,—had other things demanding their instant activity,—and could not stay as if to enjoy the complacency of what they had done ;—are not detained by any delighted wonder that they should have been able to do it.

Peter did as he was commanded,—but was so amazed that he thought it was all “*a vision*.” What an infinite series of things, God can, if he will, throughout all eternity, display, successively, to his intelligent creatures, that will so astonish them that it will require time to recover their faculties to apprehend as reality ; and which will fill them with delight as soon as they can stedfastly apprehend them. Paul, in his rapture to the third heaven, had not time for this full recovery, for he could never tell, whether he had then been “*in the body*,” or “*out of it*.”

The outermost great “*iron gate*” opened of “*its own accord*,” to illustrate the power of spirit over matter, especially when that spirit is not itself grossly involved in matter. And doubtless a larger measure of this commanding power will be conferred on the human spirits that are in the Divine favour, in that higher state where they shall no longer be loaded with their vehicle of clay. In this splendid manner was Peter led out of prison. How different from that in which he had been brought in ! grasped as a criminal, loaded with fetters,—attended by guards who despised their charge, insulted, probably, by the populace ! How different, too, from that in which the tyrant had intended he should be led out ! That tyrant might take, or not, as he pleased, this one more lesson and proof, that there *is* in action on earth, a will and a power above all human might and pride. To the humble Christians it would be an animating manifestation in whose hands they were.

The angel left Peter, having accomplished his appointment. But, there was to be another time when Peter would

want the visit of such a messenger! And there will be a time when *we* also shall want it;—when we shall have to go out from the prison-house of mortality,—and from the world itself. And let us seriously think, what previous course, what habits, what spirit prevailing through our life, will be likely to terminate in our finding such a messenger appointed to be with us at that hour,—appointed to be with us, and *not* to leave us,—to accompany us in an immense and amazing journey; that whereas Peter came to be delightedly and collectedly sensible of the grand intervention when he found himself alone in the street,—*we* may become sensible of the wondrous reality of it, by finding ourselves in the presence of saints, and angels, and their supreme Lord!

1825.

LECTURE XLIX.

THE POWERS OF THE WORLD TO COME.

HEBREWS vi. 5.

“The powers of the world to come;”—

THAT is to say, belonging to, and operating from, that world which, as to us, is “*to come*,” though now existing. And by “*powers*,” we easily understand, forces,—energies, agencies,—influences,—virtues,—and these in action upon their proper subjects.

Now, we are subjects to be acted upon. Our nature has almost its whole exercise, we might almost say, the verification of its existence—in being acted upon, by influences and impressions, from things extraneous to it. If our imagination could, for an instant, admit so fantastic, and indeed monstrous, an idea, as that of one human being existing, and nothing else, this idea could not stay before the mind. It would, in its very conception, be the idea of an existence immediately shrinking into nothing, —having no inherent sufficiency of existence to exist even for an instant. We easily conceive of the Divine Being existing in the eternal absence of all other existence; with nothing to contribute to Him, or act upon Him. But all creatures must have their existence, as it were, substantiated to them, by means of something from without them. How many things are acting, how many causes are producing their effects, on *us*! Would they were all good ones! But it is alarming to reflect how far otherwise is the fact.

“*The powers of the world to come.*” There is one pure, salutary, beneficent order of influences, tending to work the

absolute, supreme, eternal good of our nature. But it confounds the mind to reflect, what proportion this class of influences bears to others, in the actual operation on mankind.

This world, too, has "*powers*," which it exerts, we do not say in rivalry with the "*powers*" of the other, but with a fearful preponderance of efficacy. Behold the evidence of the mighty, extended, incessant, predominant operation of the powers of this world! Is it not as evident to our view, as the very face and colour of the earth, that incomparably a greater proportion of human spirit and character is conformed to *this* world than to the other?

But, there may be persons to say, "And how should it be otherwise, seeing our relations to this world are so immediate, so many, and so essentially constituting our present condition, in which this world has the most peremptory and inevitable demands upon us? How can men but be conformed to what they are, by the necessity of their condition, so intimately and constantly implicated with?" The answer would be, certainly, that to a considerable extent, this is inevitable, and not wrong. There is a *body* composed of this world's elements, intimately involved in them, and depending on them; through *this*, the present world *will* have a great effect on the spirit. The necessary care of temporal well-being keeps the soul in close communication with this world, at innumerable points. The limitation of our direct sensible knowledge to this world, gives great power to the world's operation on us. Under such a constitution of our existence, this world has "*powers*" which will and must, to a considerable extent, assimilate the human spirit; and, to a considerable extent, they may, rightfully, do so. But to what extent? Is not that a most serious question?

The answer would be obtained by means of one or two other plain questions, which a man should ask himself.

For example;—"Do this world's influences act upon me, *so*, that I habitually and practically forget the other world? *so*, that I am reluctant even to think of the world to come as a personal concern? *so*, that I feel that my sojourn here is really not answering the purpose of a preparation for that world to come? *so*, that I am sensible, on reflection, that I am actually in a wrong state of mind for entering that world? *so*, that I have not a decided, habitual, strong affection for the objects there? *so*, that it is a gloomy thought, that I am constantly approaching that world? *so*, that it would be alarming and terrible to receive a warning that I should very soon be there?" Let conscience answer such plain questions of trial.

If these questions cannot be answered, in some degree satisfactorily, there should be a solemn movement of alarm in the soul, to think under what unhappy dominion it is held a captive. Like a man who, proceeding toward his distant home or country, finds himself, in his journey, circumvented, and arrested, and detained, by a band of men of malignant aspect, and dark and menacing purpose. To think! "Here is the brief, introductory portion of my existence,—yonder is its awful immensity; and I am engrossed, absorbed, by the little local concerns of this diminutive tract! Here is the immortal spirit which belongs to heaven. I let it give its main best energy of study, and care, and affection, and passion, to things which will concern me but for a few short years at the most. There is '*the world to come*,' actually approaching; I might perceive its signs,—feel its gale,—see its gleams,—hear its sounds,—be sensible of the vicinity of its spirits, and, I am virtually saying, 'Let those omens retire! Keep back, thou mighty economy, and leave me undisturbed here, to my little world of trifles!' That '*world to come*' comprehends the sum, the perfection of everything, the

sublimest, the best, the happiest. But what is it all to me? I feel no congeniality nor attraction."

But, is not this a lamentable and fearful state for the soul to be in? But, what is to be done? What, but to implore that "*the powers of the world to come*" may be brought upon us with irresistible force? and that we should make earnest efforts, if we may express it so, to place ourselves exposed to them? This is to be done in the way of directing the serious attention of the mind, to that world. Let us fairly make the trial—what agency, what influences, that world can convey upon us. The proof of its influential power has been displayed on very many, in effects the most salutary and noble.

One of these effects is, that it causes the unseen to predominate, in our minds, over what is seen; the future over the present; and these are great and admirable effects. From that world, come the influences to fix and keep us in one great sovereign purpose of life; and *that*, a purpose high above all the mere interests of this world. From that world, comes the enlightening and active principle which, at once, exposes the nature of sin, and renders and keeps it odious to the soul. From that world, comes the supporting, animating power for endurance of the ills of life, and for overcoming the fear of death. In short, "*the powers of the world to come*" form the antagonist forces against the noxious operation of the influences of *this* world. And, is not all this infinitely desirable and indispensable? Look, how it fares with those who are going on through life under no such influences! But, think how it fares with ourselves, in proportion to the deficiency of them! Well may the reflection often strike us, "If we had but more of those influences acting on us!"

Let us sometimes, employ our thoughts on the qualities and circumstances of "*the powers of the world to come.*"

Consider, for example, they are influences emanating from objects and realities which preceded the very existence of this world, and will remain after it shall be demolished; from God, and Christ, and Angels; from Eternity; from everlasting Truth; from whatever region is that of the sublimest glory in the universe. They are forces of operation, from a source whence an awful energy of operation is extended to *the dark world of punishment*. Oh, how different an agency of power from that which we, here, may invoke and feel!

They are "*powers*" of influence which all the best beings conspire to send. For, even the departed saints are placed, as it were, in combination with God, the Mediator, and the Angels, in sending a beneficent influence on us below;—by their memory,—by their example,—by their being displayed to our faith as in a blissful state above,—and, (we may believe,) by their kind regard and wishes for those below. And good and wise men have thought it not irrational to suppose that they may, sometimes, even be employed in real actual ministries here on earth. These "*powers*" of the other world we are regarding chiefly under the character of influences, proceeding at the will of God, and conceived as exclusive of personal agency. But, far oftener than we suspect, there may be the intervention, though invisible, of such an agency.

All these "*powers*," these forces of influence, are sent, through the medium, and in virtue of the work, of the Mediator; and bear in them a peculiar character, derived from Him. These "*powers*" from the other world, are of such quality and force, that they can direct and compel, and combine, "*all things to work for good*." They are "*powers*" which attract toward where they come from; which discipline, and refine, and prepare, the soul, for its grand future destiny, and to which it may surrender itself without

reserve. They are "*powers*" which the spirit will exult in even the more, the more fully it is surrendered to them. They are "*powers*" from a world where our own great final interest lies; and operating, by means of faith, from a world of which the realities will, at length, be the objects of sight. They are "*powers*" which may be implored always, and may be obtained, to a very great degree of their efficacy; no *ne plus ultra*. No one has so much grace, faith, spiritual strength, or victory over sin, and Satan, and himself, that he has no right to desire and petition more. No one is maintaining the opposition to the pernicious powers of this world, with such easy and complete success, that he does not, every day, need more of the energy derived from "*the world to come*."

Consider, how fast we are all advancing to go into another world. And who would not wish to enter it, with the very utmost advantage of having proceeded thither under the influence of its "*powers*?" Who would not wish to arrive in the unveiled presence of the mighty realities with the delightful sense that their influence had been mighty,—in preparing his spirit as it were to rush with rapture into the midst of their glory?

February 10, 1825.

LECTURE L.

PERSEVERANCE IN PRAYER.

LUKE xviii. 1.

“ And he spake a parable unto them, to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.”

THIS parable is indeed a very remarkable one, both for the condescension which it shows in the adoption of such an illustration, and in the force of the inference. It supposes the case of a bad man in power, importuned by a widow to right her wrongs. He is averse to it; he cares nothing about her distresses, nor about justice, nor God. And yet even *he*, thus regardless of right and of his duty as a judge, and without the slightest compassion for her necessities and sorrows,—even such a one may be induced by persevering entreaty to do her right, for the mere sake of his own convenience.

Think of such a character being put in parallel to God! Then the inference, *à fortiori*,—if with such a one importunity may at last prevail, “*shall not God avenge his own elect?*” And this is but one of numberless passages, inciting men to pray, and to continue to do so, and ensuring the ultimate success.

The exercise of Prayer is set forth, throughout the whole of Revelation, as essential to religion. It is represented as the indispensable act and evidence of acknowledgment and worship of the Almighty. The precepts relating to it, are express, and, by implication, innumerable. The special forms and terms of it, as uttered by devout men, are in

great variety and multitude. The promises made to it form the main body of all the promises in the Bible. The instances of good connected with it, and obtained by it, form a rich portion of the Sacred History. And then, all the good men, from the beginning of time to this hour, have practised it; not one of them now in a better world but did. On every spot where there has ever been a good man, there has been prayer. God has heard, from earth, from every man that ever loved, feared, and served him. The practice has spread out with true religion to the very utmost line and point to which that religion has reached. With all good men it has been the primary expedient in seeking to be happy. It has been the grand resource in seeking truth—in performing duty—in resisting temptation—in bearing affliction—and in preparing to meet death.

What a delightful, and solemn, and, by its numbers, magnificent, vision back in thought, is that of all who ever prayed, habitually, on earth! And the pre-eminent dweller on earth, the Messiah himself, was an example of this practice.

Now, then, if there be men, professing to believe in revealed religion, who yet allege that they are obstructed and withheld from prayer by a philosophical difficulty attending the subject, we must avow that we can feel no respect for such feelings. It is the genuine spirit of religion that they want; if they had that, all these speculative perplexities would be overborne and swept away. We need not be detained a moment on this speculative point. Two plain observations may suffice. One is, that, though God has certainly predetermined what he will do, and his purpose cannot be changed, yet, in many instances, he has predetermined it to be done, *as in answer to prayer*, and not otherwise, not separately from it; so that, not to petition for the supposed good, involves a certainty of not obtaining it, and

vice versâ. The other observation is—that, (the absoluteness of the divine predeterminations being fully admitted) it is still perfectly natural, rational, and proper, that his creatures should desire good from him; and it would be a wrong and an absurd state of mind if they did not. But then, prayer is rational and proper,—for it is simply the expression of such desire, directed to him.

A great rational act and duty, then, is prayer. But, reflect what it is to do! Think of Him who is the Infinite of every perfection! Descend to the less sublime contemplation of Him, as having created, and as maintaining an absolute dominion over the almost unlimited vastness of the Universe. Prayer is to accost such a Being; directly, pointedly, and, so to speak, personally. We can go from speaking to fellow mortals, to speak to Him,—to call His attention to us individually; to request him to hear what we say; to offer from our little and guilty spirits thoughts to be admitted into his. Think what a marvellous thing it is to do this!—and that this may be done! And what a glorious privilege it would appear, if we had a thousandth part of the right apprehension! Think, then, in what manner we too often perform *this great act of the soul!**

* Mr. Coleridge, within two years of his death, very solemnly declared to me his conviction on the same subject (Prayer). I was sitting by his bedside one afternoon, and he fell, an unusual thing for him, into a long account of many passages of his past life, lamenting some things, condemning others, but complaining withal, though very gently, of the way in which many of his most innocent acts had been cruelly misrepresented. “But I have no difficulty,” said he, “in forgiveness; indeed I know not how to say with sincerity the clause in the Lord’s Prayer which asks forgiveness *as we forgive*. I feel nothing answering to it in my heart. Neither do I find or reckon, the most solemn faith in God as a real object, the most arduous act of the reason and the will. O no, my dear, it is *to pray, to pray* as God would have us; this is what at times makes me turn cold to my soul. Believe me, to pray with all your heart and strength,

Think, once again, of those millions in the Christian world, who deem it not worth performing,—and who scorn those that addict themselves in earnest to such an employment!

To this infinitely glorious and awful Being, we may freely represent all our interests, all our wants, great and small, without reserve, and with prolonged repetition, and with a happy exemption from the various restraining, repressive, and embarrassing feelings which interfere when disclosures are wished to be made to fellow mortals. In this happy freedom even the smallest of our concerns may be represented and pleaded; but at the same time, the consciousness of being in such a presence must needs contribute to our putting the main emphasis on the greatest. And, if we have any right, habitual sense of their greatness and urgency, shall we not continue and persevere in supplication,—when we can make it to such a Being?

To encourage and enforce this perseverance is indeed the special purpose of the Parable—“*that men ought always to pray and not to faint.*” It implies that the petitioners to God may not obtain an immediate, or very speedy, evidence that their prayers are effectual. And under the delay, the weakness of their nature may tend to despondency,—and the corruption of it may tend to murmuring impatience—an impatience even partaking of resentment.

But, let it be solemnly impressed on the mind—“Shall dependent, sinful, unthankful creatures presume to prescribe to the Almighty?” Let them reflect what a value their pride is setting on their petitions,—that more of them ought

with the reason and the will, to believe vividly that God will listen to your voice through Christ, and verily do the thing he pleaseth thereupon—this is the last, the greatest achievement of the Christian’s warfare upon earth. *Teach* us to pray, O Lord!” And then he burst into a flood of tears, and begged me to pray for him. O what a sight was there!—COLERIDGE’S *Table Talk*, edited by H. N. Coleridge, Esq., 2nd ed., p. 85.

not to be required to go to the desired effect! And what an impious importance they may be setting on what they suffer through the delay! Let it be considered, that the delay may be intended for the very important and necessary object of impressing a more full and humbling conviction of their own helplessness. In the interval the mind tries, and tries again, its own strength. Let it be considered, that if there be a genuine spiritual sense of want, the delay augments the apprehension of the importance of the objects desired. Reflect, how feebly this importance is felt, even in Prayer. And when the desired good is granted to this stronger sense of its value, the receiver is grateful for the preceding discipline which did thus contribute to heighten his estimate of it; he says, "I am now thankful that I did not sooner obtain it."

Consider, how many things divine wisdom may see necessary to be done, in a man's mind and his circumstances, before a certain gift is granted, and before it is fit to be granted. There even may be some little-suspected sinful principle requisite to be brought to light to the petitioner's conscience, and mortified. It is always certain that God's best gifts will be so given as to magnify his mercy and abase the receiver in his own sight. If all this be reflected on, the petitioner, under any delay, may well believe that God has a good reason for it.

Consider, again, the different classes of the good things that men have to pray for. There are many things which men are permitted to ask of God, but under an acknowledged uncertainty whether they will be given. The promises respecting them are not absolute. They are not indispensable to our supreme interest. We may not have them, and yet enjoy the divine favour and be happy for ever. Of this class we may mention health,—the prolonged life of friends—the indulgence of Providence upon worldly

pursuits. Things of this class are to be prayed for with an express submission not to receive them. And to fail of obtaining them, even after many prayers, will be a cause for the exercise of devout resignation.

But, in praying for blessings of the nobler order, there is no requirement of submission in the same sense. The petitioner is required never to submit, in the sense of yielding not to receive the good. To the last breath he is still to persist. The Promises are absolute as to ultimate success, to the man who in earnest seeks, and perseveres to seek, the divine favour—acceptance in Jesus Christ—the sanctification of his soul—eternal salvation. Therefore men are to “*pray always and not faint.*”

But here also, God maintains a sovereign discretion, as to the manner, circumstances, degrees, and times of his favourable manifestation. He appoints as he will, the whole process of discipline through which his praying servant shall be conducted to the final attainment. And there may be very protracted and painful delay, in granting the tokens of prayer answered—such as, a decided consciousness of an effectual operation on the mind,—a firm trust for pardon through Jesus Christ,—the subduing of internal evil,—a prevailing hope of eternal happiness,—or victory over the fear of death.

But still men are to “*pray always.*” What else can the suppliant do? where else can he go? This he must do, and persevere to do, unless he can be willing to resign all for lost. Let him survey the immense accumulation of the Divine Promises; let him contemplate the all-sufficiency of the mediation of Christ; let him recall to his meditation the many examples of a happy success. Finally, let us “*be followers of them who now, through faith and patience, inherit the Promises.*”

Feb. 20, 1825.

LECTURE LI.

THE LOVE OF MONEY.

1 TIMOTHY vi. 10.

“The love of money is the root of all evil.”

THE analogy between the evil things in the natural and in the moral world has some exceptions. One is suggested by our text. A mischievous *vegetable* root (say, of a worthless weed, or of an offensive or poisonous production) springs up into only *one* kind of evil. But here, in the *moral* soil, we have one thing named as the root of *all* evil. In the principles of *moral* evil there is a dreadful provision for supernumerary mischief.

It is not, however, meant that literally all the evils there are spring from the love of money,—but that it is the cause of many and various ones. Now surely, a vicious principle which produces so *many* bad effects should be exposed, and forcibly protested against. And that not *seldom*,—if we consider that a thing which has a variety and multitude of bad effects *is always working some of them*; it has not a single and temporary operation.

How comes it, then, to be so unusual, in the discourses of our Christian teachers, to fix upon this vice, with adequate terms of reprobation? Is it, that they are afraid lest they should give offence and provoke anger?—For, truly, covetousness, though its most obvious character be that of a cold and hard disposition, is yet a very irritable and resentful one. Or, is it, because there is a difficulty in stating, discriminatively, *what* “love of money” (in kind or degree)

amounts to the vice of covetousness; so that this disposition in a man might be brought plainly to the test?

We *will* not attribute this omission to a notion that it is no GOSPEL preaching to expose and censure an evil which our Lord and his Apostles seized *every* occasion to condemn and warn against, in the most emphatic language.

It cannot be, neither, that the Christian ministers never descry any signs of the *existence* of such a thing, anywhere among their congregations, or even their *churches*. No; often enough, when disclosing their thoughts in converse with a few confidential friends, they are heard alluding, with imputations of this vice, to individual professors of religion, even within their own communion,—sometimes sorrowfully,—sometimes indignantly. The *indignant* feeling one has sometimes heard expressed in terms to *this* effect:—namely, “When there occurs, in the conduct of some person in one of our churches, some single circumstance of very marked impropriety, perhaps from the surprise of temptation, exciting a sudden impulse of temper or passion,—we are under the necessity of taking account of it—and proceeding to an act of severe censure—perhaps to the length of exclusion from our society. But, there is at the very same time among us, and concurring in this very proceeding, a man, of good property perhaps, who is evidently and unquestionably actuated by a constant intense love of money. He is *known* by his neighbours and acquaintance to be both parsimonious and avaricious. And of his parsimony at least, we, as a religious society, have too sensible proof. But he *professes* himself a disciple of Christ:—has given a very rational and *apparently* sincere account of how he was brought to become such. In his religious opinions he is true to the evangelic standard. He is punctual and serious in all our religious services, public and private; quite regular, decorous, and correct in the

tenor of his conduct; no scandals, no frivolities, and no transgressions of the bare rules of legal justice in his dealings. But then, there is this one habitual, pervading vice, of covetousness. Does not this constitute a much greater amount of what is contrary to Christianity than many an act of misconduct for which we would exclude a person from our communion? But we do not know how to take formal cognizance of it, or to shape the charge against him. And so, between this difficulty, and the judgment of charity, we are constrained to keep silence, and to treat him as an honourable member of our Christian society."

Cases more or less answering to this description are far enough from being uncommon in the experience of churches and their ministers. But whatever difficulty they may involve, let not, at any rate, the teachers of religion be deterred, in their public ministrations, from declaring against this vice, most explicitly, and not unfrequently. Let them not be afraid to read for their text, "*Covetousness, which is idolatry*;" or this good text of ours, "*The love of money is the root of all evil.*"

The plainest mode of illustration would be, after describing the passion itself, to represent, specifically, several of the "*evils*" in which it shows its character and operation. The passion ("*the love of money*") exists under various modifications. In some few of its subjects, it appears to be pure, unmixed, exclusive; terminates and is concentrated upon just the *money itself*,—(that is, the *property*) the delight of being the owner of so much. "It is mine! so much!" It is the fervent desire of being able to say, "So much more I am worth!" The whole soul is absorbed in this one sentiment. This is plain, genuine *idolatry*.

But, in much the greater number of instances, the passion involves a regard to some *relative* objects. In some it is

combined with vanity; a stimulating desire of the *reputation* of being rich; to be talked of, admired, envied. We have even heard of such a thing as a desire of the fame of *dying* rich!

“That loudest laugh of hell—the pride of dying rich.”

In some, it has very much a reference to that authority, weight, prevailing influence, in society, which property confers; here, it is *ambition*, rather than *avarice*.

In some, the passion has its incitement in an exorbitant calculation for competence. So much, and so much, they shall want; so much more they *may* want, for themselves or their descendants. So much more they should like to secure as a provision against contingencies. They have, perhaps, a settled preference of a mode of living; they do not *think* they shall ever be disposed materially to change it; but they wish the means for doing so may be in possession, in *case they ever should*.

Some are avaricious from a *direct dread of poverty*. Amidst their thousands, they are haunted by the idea of coming to want. Some miserable mortals surrounded with immense opulence have been dogged and harassed by this, like an evil spirit. When it has been a toil but to keep the account of their revenues, they have pinched themselves and their dependants in the plainest necessities of life, from apprehension lest they should one day come to beggary or starvation;—This is the *insane* excess,—of rare occurrence. But there are many men in whom an avaricious disposition is incited, and in their own view justified, by some undefined danger of being reduced to indigence. And this idea of danger, from *being* undefined, can *always* hover about a man, and force its way, into his thoughts.

So described, this spirit, possessing and actuating such a number of our fellow mortals, bears an ill and very foolish

aspect. Let us now specify a few of its evil effects, with a note of admonition on each of them.

One obvious effect is,—that it tends to arrogate, and narrow, and impel the whole action and passion of the soul toward one exclusive object, and that an ignoble one. Almost every thought that starts, is to go that way. If the man's mind were to fall into a mere vague *musings* of fancy,—he would very soon find it got *there* again; an unnoticed but constant current has carried him *thither*. If he has occasion, and strong occasion, to think of a quite different subject awhile,—the thought instinctively and dexterously takes a turn *that* way. When he rises in a morning,—when he looks at the materials of his business—when he takes a walk—when he falls into conversation—still *thither* goes his mind. Silver and gold have a magnetic power over his whole being. The *natural* magnet *selects* its subject of attraction, and will draw *only that*; but *this* magnetism draws *all* that is in the little world of the man's being. Or it is an effect like that of a strong, steady wind; every thing that is stirred and moveable, that rolls on the ground, or floats on water or air, is driven in that one direction. If it were a *noble* principle,—if it were *religion*, that exerted over him this monopolizing and all-impelling power, what a glorious condition! but just as inglorious and degraded, when the commanding principle is,—the love of self!—What a humiliated being,—for a spiritual, rational, and immortal one,—you behold, when you are observing a man whose whole inquisitiveness, and his emotions, of hope, fear, pleasure, and grief, are *mechanically* borne toward devices, opportunities, and successes, or failures, in the prosecution of this one object.

The brief admonition upon this is, that if a man feel this to be mainly the state of his mind, it is a proof and warning to him that he is wrong.

Observe, again, that this passion, when thus predominant, throws a mean character into the estimate of all things, as they are all estimated according to a standard of *money-value*, and in *reference to gain*. Thus *another* value which they may have, and, perhaps the *chief* one, is overlooked, unseen, and lost. They may be things highly adapted to intellectual interest,—to enlarge knowledge,—to gratify a cultivated taste. Or things of importance for the convenience or improvement of mankind; or connected with the operations and advancement of *religion*. (Thus the dissenters have been lately taxed with building places for the worship of God on a pure speculation for making money.) In the view of the covetous man all things stand divested of their peculiar character and colour, and he sees nothing in them but what is available to *his* purpose—of gain; he has a cold contempt of all other pursuits.

Again,—this passion places a man in a very *selfish* relation to other men around him. He looks at them very much with the eyes of a *slave-merchant*. He cannot *sell* them, but the constant question in his mind is, “*What, and how, can I gain by them?*—*This* one and *that*, has been worth so much to me; what can I make of the *third*?—What I can gain by them, any of them or all, is all I care about them.” Think of the *friendships* of such a man,—and his engagements in co-operation!

When this principle has the full ascendancy, it creates a settled *hardness* of character. The man lives, as to the kinder affections, in the region of perpetual ice. He is little accessible to the touches and emotions of sympathy; cannot give himself out in any generous expansion of the affections. Even when he appears cheerful and social, those who know him feel a chilling atmosphere round him. Distress, which he sees or hears of, especially when from *want*, has little influence on him,—except to shut him up

the more firmly in his well-guarded selfishness. Covetousness can supplant even what may be called the natural sentiments of humanity. Thus, many a one has calculated coolly,—or rather with the warmth of desire, on the death of friends or near relatives, in consideration of what would be *gained* in consequence! And this suggests, that *hypocrisy* is a vice incident to this character. For often a *seeming* of kindness, fair pretences, professions of regard, &c.—are practised to the living, and a temporary appearance of sorrow assumed over the dead.

All this may be, *short* of acts of *injustice*, in the *ordinary* sense of that word. Such a man may have a *conscience* not to violate the *palpable, technical* limits of right and wrong. Indeed, he may be a *self-righteous* man all the while, and rest his merit, his moral excellence, on this very ground; that he has maintained a strict integrity; that he has *wronged* no one—has met all just claims. At the same time, you will find him always going as *near as possible* to the extreme line of limitation.

And here observe again,—that the disposition in question operates, with a slow but continual effect, to pervert the judgment and conscience. It is constantly pressing the line that divides right from wrong; it removes it, bends it away, by slight degress. The distinction becomes less positive to the judgment. Self-interested casuistry is put in operation. Unsound pleas, and reasons, and excuses, are called in. There is a constant tendency to *equivocate with conscience*; and this often ends in at once satisfying it and defrauding it. Let every man who feels the working of this passion, and is not willing it should beguile him, bring himself under a rigorous examination, before God, on this ground.

We need not, before a Christian assembly, do more than just advert to the enormous account of *absolute and flagrant*

wrongs which have been perpetrated from the love of money ; —the frauds—the taking advantage of *law* in despite of moral justice,—the plunders and murders—and the black list of other iniquitous expedients. What a legion of violences and villainies this passion can boast to have brought upon mankind !

But, it comes nearer to the object of Christian admonition, to observe the operation of this evil principle in ways not incompatible with what may be called integrity.

It withholds from all the generous and beneficent exertions and co-operations, in which *pecuniary* liberality is indispensable ; and excites against them a spirit of criticism, exception, cavil and detraction. “They are sanguine, extravagant.” “This is not the time.” “They are unnecessary, impracticable.” “There are many evil consequences.” “At least I will wait to see.” “There are many persons on whom the claim is greater than on me.”

It causes to forego opportunities for gaining a beneficial influence over men’s minds.

It puts an *equivocal and inconsistent* character on *Providence*. “As to *my own* interests, Providence is not *at all* to be *trusted*—I must take the whole care on myself. As to *other* interests, *they* are to be *wholly* left to Providence ; Providence will take care.”

We only add, it fatally counteracts and blasts internal piety, in all its vital sentiments. Now, the *admonition*, upon all these representations, is, that those who feel or suspect in themselves any tendency to love money too much, should most faithfully inspect their minds, to ascertain whether the passion is producing any of these evil effects ; whether it is *in a degree* doing this. For there is danger of self-deception in the very act of applying these representations as tests.

These descriptions for exemplification, are put in the

strong and extreme form; and a man may easily say, and perhaps truly, "the love of money carries me no such lengths as *that*." But be it remembered, that a *degree* of evil is the evil in *that degree*, and always *tending to more*. Let a man who is sensible of the "*love of money*," examine whether the feeling fixes very much on the *thing itself* (the property, the gain) without a conscientious respect to its proper *uses*;—whether, the more he *has* gained, the *more he has felt disposed* to consult his conscience about its proper use;—whether it is *growing* in its power over his mind; whether unsuccessfulness in the pursuit of gain, (or the loss of it,) has been felt by him, or not, a grievance more distressing than a conscious want of prosperity in his *spiritual* interests;—whether, if successful, he has been willing to take that as a kind of consolation, and compensation, for a conscious deficiency of *religious* welfare;—whether his "*love of money*" be but such, strictly no more than such, as leaves a very clear distinction between the professed Christian and the mere man of the world;—whether it be really such as does *not* interfere with the grand duty of mainly "*setting the affections on things above, and not on things on the earth*:" whether it comport with a habitual solemn consideration of the account of the stewardship to be given to the Great Master;—and finally, whether it consist with a constant reference to the prospect of leaving the world behind, and with an earnest preparation to leave it.

LECTURE LII.

GOD NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS.

ACTS x. 34.

“ God is no respecter of persons.”

THOUGH this may be an unwelcome declaration as regarding a minor division of mankind, it must be accounted a favourable one as affecting the vastly greater proportion of them; since it affirms, that those who have not any conspicuous pretensions to make, (and that is the far greater number), do not stand before Him on any ground of comparative disadvantage.

Here, in this point of *respect of persons*, we have one of the many strong contrasts between God and men. And perhaps the most simple and useful way of employing our thoughts a little while on the subject set forth in the text, would be to name a few of those well-known things which draw respect to men's persons, and observe how differently they are accounted of by God,—and by man.

In comparing man and God, as to that which they both do, that is, *estimating persons*,—we may notice, in the outset, a grand difference, antecedent to that suggested by the text, that is,—Man's estimate is of very limited compass, as to the number of persons taken account of—God's is universal. Men, any particular men, can take account of but very few persons, for either respect or contempt. Ourselves, for instance, on how few of mankind can we exercise any judgment whatever, to estimate their claims to respect, or anything about them. Look at the multitude of the inhabitants

of a great city, or of any province of a country,—what a great majority of them we can have no individual estimate of at all! And then think of a nation,—and the whole world. There are, indeed, a few distinguished persons in each part of a country, whom most of the inhabitants know something about,—a few that a whole nation knows by repute; several, who have a character in the estimate of a great part of the civilized world,—but what a diminutive number do these make! Excepting all but a comparative few, each person has an extremely limited sphere in which to be respected, or the contrary, by his fellow mortals.

But God, *one* all-knowing Judge, has his estimate of every person of the entire race.

But to the immediate subject: *the respect of persons*, so prevalent among men, can have no place with God, because to him the whole world of mere exteriors is as nothing. Man is the dupe and idolater of them, all over the world. Nothing so mean or bad, but, if a fine appearance can be thrown over it, it becomes as a god to him; his soul seems to live chiefly in his senses. It is amazing to think of how little account with men is the pure reality of things. And then think how all the dazzling, delusive externals vanish in the sight of God. He beholds and estimates men in their intrinsic qualities. What an infinity of superficial, extraneous shows *part off* from them under that inspection,—*that* is foreign to the man—and again *that*! What a different thing must *man* appear, when all these are fled! And if men could be presented *thus* to one another, what would become of most of the human gods of human idolatry? It is true, that men are not to be reproached for not banishing entirely all these superficial appearances, for not look on men with a solar radiance which would penetrate and disperse every fallacy that invests them. The feebleness of our vision cannot do this entirely. But it is true, also, that we are

far too willing to be imposed on by the delusive show of the world.

Again,—men are respecters of persons from a principle of self-interest. They are looking up to certain men, and thinking what advantages they can confer;—what profit,—what favour,—what honour, or, sometimes, what evil they have the power to inflict. This, no doubt, produces a great deal of hypocrisy,—of feigned respect. But also, it does really magnify these persons in their esteem. There are multitudes thus looking to certain individuals with homage, as if they were the grand rulers and disposers of their destiny. In effect saying, “In his favour is my life.” It were but trifling to show how the Divine Being can be under no such influence in his estimates.

In men’s respecting of persons, some are foolish enough to do it because others do, without well knowing any other reason why. As a number of persons collected at a real or supposed spectacle will quickly draw a multitude. So, let an individual come, by any means, to be accounted of importance, by a portion of society, and it is curious to observe what an accession there shall soon be, of respectful opinions, tributary speeches, manners of deference. Each individual feels as if he were the wiser and safer for thinking with many,—as if he took the strength of the collective opinions into his own.

God has no opinion in the universe to regard, respecting men or anything else, but his own. What is it to Him that that one diminutive creature after another adds its slender intellect in affirmation of the judgment of a crowd. In every view, he is infinitely superior to the influence of all the causes by which men are made to be “*respecters of persons*.” Contemplate this his divine superiority, in reference to several of those things which command men’s highest respect. For example, we all see how men are affected

toward persons of great wealth. This perhaps is the most obvious of all the exemplifications of this human folly. The impression made by this wealth, when displayed or acknowledged, is instantaneous, and it is almost universal. What deference, what regulated and subdued demeanour—what attention to what is said—what prompt compliance! Suppose a man, in the first instance, not known to be rich, and the impression he makes shall be simply that of his apparent personal qualities,—his dispositions, his sense, his manners. And suppose it then to become suddenly known that he is very rich,—what a difference! The movements of such persons are observed and reported, as matters of importance. Some good that they do, perhaps in no proportion to their superior means, shall be proclaimed and lauded. Their opinions shall be cited as of weight, when it is, evidently, no superiority of reason or knowledge that makes them so. A very considerable degree of misconduct, or vice, does not put them down in society. Their acquaintance and company shall be held reputable, and courted, when the same ill character in men of no wealth would make them shunned. They can at once defy opinion, and be sure of obsequiousness.

What a state of human sentiments is this, in the sight of God! He “*is no respecter of persons.*” He regards them as of the common material of humanity; does not mistake their wealth for a part of them; does not concentrate the cares of his Providence peculiarly on them,—not less requires a sense of entire dependence;—does not, *if they* pray, give a precedence to their applications;—does not hold them less guilty in their sins;—does not give them sounder or more lasting bodies, or an exemption from the worst evils of the mortal state;—does not adopt an instant change of sentiment respecting them, if they fall from affluence to poverty;—does not ensure them that in the

other world they shall be glad they have been rich in this!

Distinguishable from this, another thing which draws great respect to persons, is, high station in what is called rank and in power. High descent is one considerable thing in this mode of superiority, the inherited quality of what are called "*the Great*;" and there is dignity of office;—and power, in its most direct forms, and widest reach. And look what "*respect for persons*" there is on this ground! In former times the case has been, (and in many parts of the world it is so still,) that the multitude have regarded this class of persons as actually being of some mysteriously higher order of human nature; and, indeed, in some ages and places, they have assumed to be really and specifically so. Still there is quite enough "*respect*" to gratify their utmost pride,—pompous titles of honour, as if to disguise the fact that they are plainly no more than mere men—a vast parade of state and ceremony,—a whole artificial system, with every gaudy appendage to confound and overawe men's perceptions and feelings into homage. And the tribute demanded, is paid. Some one of these persons is regarded as if he included as much as the collective value of hundreds or thousands of common mortals—"thou art worth ten thousand of us." The ground is cleared for them, in society, wherever they appear;—the insolence of their very dependants and menials is patiently submitted to;—their mere will, or caprice, is considered as authority, without requiring a reason;—their misfortunes are themes for romance and tragedy;—the worship of God, itself, is deemed to be vastly honoured if they deign to pay it some formalities of attention,—the leading performer in such worship feeling far more respect for them than for its Object, and regarding one of them, present as of more importance than all the

assembly together besides. If they be of the most notorious and inveterate profligacy, any trifling equivocal circumstance that looks like an acknowledgment of religion, is magnified into an auspicious phenomenon,—an indubitable symptom of some great and happy change. Every conceivable palliation is adduced, by force, in their behalf, to extenuate the grossness of sin. Men that maintain a better character themselves, are gratified, as being highly honoured, by the favourable attentions of the vicious Great. In extreme cases, (but indeed such have often occurred,) the public good is yielded up a sacrifice to the pride and other bad passions of the persons predominant in power. There are pompous funeral celebrations of the virtues of the worst and meanest persons when departed.

So much for men's "*respect*;" now turn the thought to God. At *that* thought, how base and contemptible appear all this perversion and extravagance of human feeling! Think! if He had any partiality like this, what would become of his just government and judgment of the world? What would then have been his dispensations in Egypt, in Babylon, in Judea? What would then be the condition of the oppressed, when they cry and appeal to him? of the humble, the poor, the despised, when they have recourse to him, as being their best or only friend? What hope would there be, that when "*two or three*" inferior mortals are met in His name, he should be "*there in the midst of them*?" *He* looks on all these distinctions, pretensions and splendours, as the mere transitory accidents of the mortal condition. He commissions no augmented guard of angels in honour of them. He requires the same lessons of humiliation, self-abasement, and repentance, to be learned by all these loftier persons, as by the meanest,—or they reject them at their peril. And his great messenger, Death, makes, as it were, melancholy sport of all these

robes of grandeur. To see! how he rends them off, and scatters them on the ground.

The one other chief imposing object in men's respect of persons is, great mental endowment. And this *is* different from the others, in being a more intrinsic quality of its possessors. And from that cause, and from its being of a nature less obvious to vulgar and general apprehension, it has nothing like so many idolaters. It would in most cases be as nothing, for gaining this homage, in comparison and competition with opulence and splendid condition. Nevertheless, it has always been an object of perverted and extravagant regard. Every epithet appropriate to Divinity has been applied. There are, at this hour, many enthusiastic admirers of human talent, who are despisers of God! It has been hailed with the utmost applause in its efforts of hostility to truth and religion. Many a work of genius has been so accounted of, as if the Bible were only fit to be burnt as incense to the author. The most fantastic theories of ingenious men have been zealously adopted as systems of solemn truth. Great ability has been honoured for confounding the distinctions between good and evil;—and has given exquisite delight in sporting with all that is the most serious. In behalf of profligate men of great talent there has been and is, a disposition to suspend or abrogate the most essential laws of morality. (Byron.) No mode of the "*respect of persons*" can be more absurd or pernicious than all this. And short of such an extreme, it may be excessive. There are persons who have no relish, hardly any tolerance, for truth, the most important, the most deeply concerning them, but as displayed in the style of genius or eloquence;—they turn with contempt from the most appropriate and serious instructions, given in a plainness of conception and language; as if the grave matter were nothing, and the individual manner, the decorations,

were all. There are some who, habitually, as a settled principle, indulge contempt for all who are not distinguished by mental superiority, of whatever excellence otherwise. And, very generally, this kind of respect of persons goes the length of causing that the Supreme Intelligence is far too little regarded. We look to human spirits as the oracles, the luminaries of our world, and little revere, and little implore the communications from, "*the Father of lights.*"

But think of *Him*! What is all this in his sight? The Being whose intellect pervades all things,—who has infinite intuition. One has often had the idea, what is the greatest human intellect, compared with what we may justly conceive of the least angelic spirit? What may even that spirit be, compared to the most elevated creative mind? What is *that*,—what are all minds together, as compared, if there might be a comparison, with the awful Original? Well may he be "*no respecter of persons!*" In this view, how little difference between the least and the greatest mind on earth! And justly may he suffer those who respect human intellect more than him, to fall into all the errors and delusions, into which perverted and worshipped human intellect has seduced men.

Such is the manner in which man, and in which God, regards the proud distinctions of humanity. And if God did not, in this, differ from man, what would be the consequence? While such have been the great objects of homage, it would be striking to consider what things in man, have obtained no such universal respect or admiration,—elevated piety, extreme conscientiousness, plain, diligent usefulness, self-denial, and indifference to this world for the sake of another. But such are the things most regarded by the Almighty. There is great consolation in such a view of the difference of God's account of men from that

which the world entertains. And cogent instruction that our manner of estimating things and men should be conformed to his. And the subject necessarily makes a reference to the last great Account. Let us look that way, whenever we feel ourselves falling into the world's manner of estimating the human condition and character. What a reversal, what a new order of estimates then, when *He* shall come to be the Judge, who was himself "*despised and rejected of men !*"

September 8, 1825.

LECTURE LIII.

THE MEETING OF FRIENDS.

EXODUS xviii. 17.

"They asked each other of their welfare."

As the present is a season more remarkable, perhaps, than any in the year, for *the meeting of friends*, there may be a degree of appropriateness in a text like this. It mentions part of what occurred at the meeting of two such friends as could not meet without being, on both sides, the better for it. Happy! if this were a description generally applicable to the meeting of friends. These two were, though of very different ages, very old friends, for Moses had lived forty years with Jethro in Midian. So that they had been combined in all the domestic interests; the welfare of each was a concern in common; there had been ten thousand acts of mutual kindness and respect.

To have had a man like Moses so long an associate and inmate must have been a privilege of the highest order,—*"all the wisdom of the Egyptians,"* combined with a larger measure of divine wisdom than was possessed by any other man on earth,—and all this softened and dignified, by the mild virtues, and a devotional spirit. For such a man to go away, must have been an incalculable loss; and a loss which so long a residence with his friends would have precluded all apprehension of. But, he had a higher destiny, and was summoned away. It was not ambition that prompted him to go. It may be presumed that his friend would understand the nature of that mandate which

compelled him to depart. No information is given to assist conjecture what degree of knowledge of the true God might be possessed in this family of Midian. It might have been extremely imperfect, and mixed and confounded with heathen superstition, before Moses came there. But it is quite impossible to believe, that he should not have faithfully, earnestly, and habitually, endeavoured to impart and inculcate *his* knowledge of that essential subject;—impossible, too, that he could have so long remained happy among them, and have been so reluctant to leave them, if they had been idolaters. And, at this interview, Jethro makes the most explicit and animated avowal of his faith in the God of Israel.

When this inestimable friend and sojourner went away, a profoundly affectionate regard would follow him, accompanied by an unceasing inquisitiveness respecting the progress of his enterprise; a conjectural inquisitiveness, for probably there were little means of knowing. But, all conjecture would fall immensely short of what he was to become, and to accomplish, in the land of Egypt. No human imagination, the most elated, the most enthusiastic, could have divined that the gentle domestic associate, the contented keeper of the flocks, the contemplative solitary of the desert, was soon to rise up, a majestic and portentous representative and agent of the Almighty;—to confound all human wisdom, and baffle all the diabolic power, in the land of Egypt;—to dictate to a proud monarch;—to give the signal for the most astonishing and tremendous judgments;—and, at length, to lead out a great people, triumphantly delivered, and to be miraculously sustained in that very desert on the border of which he had tended the flocks of Jethro.

But, may we not presume, that if, amidst these magnificent transactions, there was any room for remembrance in the mind of Moses, Jethro would not be forgotten? There

might be moments in which his thoughts would glance back to the peaceful scene, and he might even imagine his excellent friend supplicating the Almighty to protect him. At length Jethro heard that the grand enterprise was accomplished, and that Moses was in the wilderness at the head of an innumerable host. He made a journey to see him, taking with him the family of Moses. The account of the greetings and discourse is a delightful picture of primitive friendship between wise and pious men. We might particularly observe upon it, that the highest order of excellence inspires confidence. Jethro was now almost at an immeasurable distance below Moses; but it is evident that he had not the slightest apprehension of not being received with the utmost kindness by the man now become so elevated and illustrious. And he felt he could express himself with the most perfect confidence in pointing out to him a defect of judgment in the administration of his high office. Nothing more palpably betrays littleness, meanness, of soul, than a supercilious looking down on estimable friends, of inferior order, after a man has attained some unexpected elevation.

The account of this meeting may suggest, too, the worthiness of the social affections, when accompanied by wisdom and piety. Moses spared some portions of time from his high employments to indulge in the kind sentiment and intercourse; and felt it quite in harmony with his most solemn duties. The time was occupied in asking and communicating information. Moses related to his father-in-law what he has recorded for us; but imagine the history given by his own voice, and in the evident spirit of humility and adoring gratitude to God! But, the mind has not power to put itself in the condition of imagining, effectually, how strange and striking, to have heard the narration, as of just recent events, in which the relater was the chief

human agent. Jethro expressed his congratulations in a fervent strain of devotion. After a short time, he returned to end his life where Providence had cast his lot, probably from its beginning. Both would remember this interview with a peculiar and perfect complacency; they had tasted the best feelings of friendship, and had contributed to each other's instruction and religion.

Leaving now this illustrious example of friendship, we may proceed to make a few general observations.

One obvious one is, that this world is not a scene adapted or intended to afford the pleasure and benefit of friendship *entire*. Jethro was to lose his inestimable friend, after long, and what must have been the happiest intimacy;—was to see him once again;—again to lose him, to see him on earth probably no more. What a measure, we may almost say, of his vital existence, this was to lose! Providence has, in numerous instances, interposed wide spaces of land, or even sea, between persons who might be inestimable to one another in near and habitual association. The one mind,—and the other,—and the third, and many more, are filled with exercises of thought, with emotions, with affections, which would glow with social and sympathetic animation if they could be one another's companions. But they have, each, their own assigned positions to occupy,—their own moral tract to cultivate,—their own duties, labours, trials—and sometimes little happy in their actual associates: they have to fulfil their vocation amidst coldness, perversity, or imbecility, thinking, sometimes, how different the case would be if such, and such, were their companions and co-operators.

How many, again, there are, who are total strangers to one another, even in name, who would be happily congenial if they could be brought into communication—but never will, in this world. While, perhaps, amidst their unpar-

ticipated sentiments and unaided projects or efforts, for improvement, or for the promotions of some good cause, they are musing, at intervals, on such imagined beings as would be congenial co-operators; "*if*—such wisdom, such courage, such piety, such zeal, such superiority to selfishness, were with me here!"—and somewhere, they are sure, there are such,—but not for them. Many that are acquainted, but far asunder, and would be happy to obtain even an interview, of any moderate duration, are destined to meet no more. Their different paths into another world are never even to cross each other again in this; though perhaps in youth they had with sanguine confidence formed their scheme for inseparable society and co-operation through life; but some unthought-of cause, some sudden emergency, some compulsion of temporal circumstances, arose to give their schemes and hopes to the wind. There are some who would be of great value to one another, if they were placed so as to be within reach of easy and familiar access,—for counsel, for aid, for mutual stimulus,—who can have this advantage but occasionally, seldom, and transiently.

But, it is right, after all, that the case should be thus. They see they cannot draw and retain around them whomsoever they would, as the most desirable co-operators for obtaining the good of life, and for averting its evils. They cannot collect and keep an assemblage of congenial spirits, to constitute, as it were, a bright social fire, ever glowing, ever burning, amidst the winter of this world. They have no magical power, to bring to their side whenever they will, the clearest-sighted instructors and counsellors, the most disinterested and generous benefactors, or the bravest allies. They cannot surround themselves with the selectest portion of humanity, so as to keep out of sight and interference the general character of human nature. They are left to be pressed upon by an intimate perception of what a depraved

and unhappy world it is. And *so* they feel themselves strangers and pilgrims upon earth.

There is also another thing in the case. It is contrary to the design of God that the more excellent of this world's inhabitants should form together into little close assemblages and bands, within exclusive circles, detached as much as possible from the general multitude; thus withdrawn from the commerce of the community;—delighted in their own concentrated fraternity, and looking with aversion on all besides. On the contrary, it is appointed that they should be scattered and diffused, hither and thither, to be useful and exemplary in a great number of situations: that there should be no large space without some of them.

Thus, it is a world that dissociates friends. Nevertheless friends do sometimes meet; and then it is quite natural to do as Moses and Jethro did,—“*ask each other of their welfare.*” For, in such meetings there is, in a good measure, a suspension of the selfish principle, which is so powerfully kept in action in the more general intercourse with men,—there is a generous expansion, in which the mind goes out beyond its own peculiar interests;—the individual's circle widens so as to intersect others, and involve, with his own, the interests of another. And the mind is delighted in thus surpassing its own limits. It escapes, as from imprisonment, into the light and warmth of sunshine. No imprisonment can be much worse than a contracted, cold, absolute, selfishness.

We may notice several kinds of feeling which prevail in the meeting, after a considerable absence, of *genuine* friends. As, kind affection—inquisitiveness—reflective comparison, and one or two more.

I. *Kind affection*; what a difference between meeting an estimable friend, and meeting an entire stranger. Jethro encountered strangers on his road (and perhaps with a

passing sentiment of benevolence); but when he came in sight of Moses! When true friends meet, it is the recalling together of beings who have on both sides been, for a while, blended and partially lost in the wide stranger community. They have many living recollections, firmly associated with each other in the mind; with many added associations of kindness, the cement of the association. There is the confidence of a certain harmony mutually existing within. The sense of having a great many kind thoughts and feelings to give as it were, all at once, that have been accumulating during past time. The sympathy extends to a great many things at once, or in quick succession. The images quickly rise to view of things that have affected the welfare separately of each,—any important crisis—an affliction—an injury suffered—a danger—an escape—a successful enterprise,—an anxious deliberation, the acquisition of some valuable good.

II. *Inquisitiveness.* “*Asked each other.*” And the mutual inquiries respecting “*welfare,*” are made in a spirit very different from unmeaning complaisance. When a friend is far away, it will sometimes occur to wonder and to imagine how he may be situated, how employed. What, at this time, is the exercise of his mind? what part is he in of the process of an undertaking? what evil dispositions of his fellow mortals is he conflicting with? what temptations is he beset by? When they meet, the inquiry goes back to such things. And it is gratifying to give the history to one who is kindly interested by it at every step. And friendship will suggest many comments which would not occur to the thoughts of an indifferent person. It may be very advantageous for the instruction and improvement of the friends that they have moved a great deal apart; so as to have had a very different experience—different views of the world and of Providence. Thus they bring in a much larger store to

the combined account,—enlarge one another's knowledge—correct and mature one another's judgment.

III. And this will involve *reflective comparison*; not an invidious, but an instructive one. The strangely different paths in which God has led us. What are the peculiar improvements of each? By what manner of exercising the mind were they made? In what manner have we, respectively, improved our advantages? In what degree have we, each, taken (so to express it) a colour from the different scenes we have passed? What is there in our different attainments by which we can the most benefit each other? Which of us is more fit for one line of usefulness, in the service of God and men, and which for another? And how wise an adjustment has it been that has made us thus to differ!

IV. Once more,—*gratitude to God* is always, in pious minds, a feeling attending these interviews and inquiries. So with Moses and Jethro. A wonderful preservation, that we are still alive! how many dreadful possibilities of disaster! Often a friend would have been alarmed, if he could, at the instant, have been fully aware of the situation of the friend at a distance. Perhaps within an inch of destruction; perhaps in a storm on the ocean; perhaps the intended object of some malignant design; but always exposed to the peril of sin and Satan. Each says, "Heaven be praised that you have come on with safety thus far!" The friends, separate and perhaps at great distance, could render no material assistance to each other; each committed, apart, to the wide world. But a Greater Friend than all has incessantly watched over both. Therefore, one of the truest acts of friendship, when they meet, will be to adore and thank God on each other's account,—to "*build an altar to the Lord.*" Let *this* most essential point never be forgotten.

We may, to close, add two or three more duties of

friends when they meet; namely, *faithful admonition* and *serious anticipation*. . They must be a most rare and singular example of friends, if nothing should be mutually seen for *admonition*. Very often the respective parties very distinctly perceive something to which they wish an admonitory suggestion could be applied. It is certainly one of the most difficult things in friendship to do this; and the manner of it should be skilful. But it is rather a slight friendship where this cannot be done at all, in any manner. And it is not a friendship of any great esteem or attachment, where the parties do not think it worth while to endeavour to assist each other to become wiser and better. In truth, there should be much more of an understanding among friends that this *is* an object to be kept in view. Might not real ones solicit this of each other? and endeavour such a repression of their own vanity and self-complacency, that it might be confidently ventured without offence? Let it be considered whether any man can receive a greater benefit from his friend than assistance to correct his errors and faults. And again we ask, why might not this be done in a perfectly amicable spirit and manner? When valuable hints of advice,—suggestions for self-observation,—remarks of just reprehension,—could be administered, and in perfect kindness, why must it be left to some moment of a friend's provoked displeasure to say such things? or left altogether to his enemies to say them? If it be the best of all things that the friends should please God, would it not be the very best principle of their attachment that they should avowedly, and on system, excite and instruct one another to do so?

The last thing is—*serious anticipation*. Each meeting should admonish them that their life is shortened (sometimes much shortened), since they met before. Sometimes they are forcibly struck by the change in each other's

appearance. After a considerable absence, they can hardly meet without having to name some one who has shared their society,—but meets them no more. When they part, confessedly for a considerable absence, how possible is it that they are looking at each other for the last time! Let it be considered, what a melancholy thing any friendship would be, that should be destined to expire with all its pleasures and advantages, at death. That is the worthy and happy friendship and that alone, where the parties are zealously preparing, and have a good hope, to meet in a nobler scene.

LECTURE LIV.

THE MEMORY OF THE JUST.

PROVERBS x. 7.

“The memory of the just is blessed.”

THE mind often goes back in review of the past human world. The vision stretches away, from the immediate past to the remotest ages,—from the point where we are standing to the remotest horizon or Time. And on this great field there are presented all the grand varieties of character. They come to view in great divisions and assemblages—in mass, as it were—bearing the broad distinctions of their respective ages, nations, and religions. They are beheld placed in the crowded scenery of the events and transactions among which they lived. But here and there, in the throng of these great assemblages, individuals stand up conspicuously to view—of extraordinary and pre-eminent character and action. Such pre-eminence in their time they must have had to remain now conspicuous in the far-off retrospect, or even to be seen from the shorter distance of a few ages or a century. When we come down to the time within our own memory, some that were not in themselves so eminently remarkable, are often, individually, brought to our recollection.

Now reflect,—in what different lights, in what different aspects of character, the human beings of past time are presented to our thoughts. How many of them are there, that an odious and horrid character perpetually rests upon! They seem to bear eternal curses on their heads. A vindictive ray of Heaven’s lightning seems continually darting

down upon them. They appear as the special points of communication and attraction between a wicked world and the Divine Vengeance. Cain stands high in sight, stained with a brother's blood. There are all the bloody conquerors,—the cruel tyrants,—the persecutors of the servants of God,—the unjust judges. Also the enemies of truth, and perverters of the human mind ;—the inventors of false religions :—the grand impostors ;—the contrivers of a system to falsify and debase the religion of Christ itself, to subserve the worst passions and purposes on earth !—the great infidel labourers and zealots for the subversion of Divine truth ;—the profligate men of talents and genius, who have devoted their utmost energy to deprave their fellow mortals. And, more within the compass of our own actual knowledge, various individuals malignantly wicked, odious in disposition, speech, and conduct. We have but to add, the great and countless multitude, collectively, that have gone away into the past, and are there indistinctly seen, as strangers to religion and holiness, and enemies of God. And, what an awful retrospect is all this ! A race, whose business here, every one, was to serve God,—to grow into wisdom and excellence,—to do good to one another,—to mature and prepare for another life. And all these gone away into another state, another world, and that a state of retribution ! And gone, in that same character unaltered in which they lived on earth ! And think ! here on earth, indeed, they are now only subjects of history or objects of memory,—only images of the mind ; they do not actually with their presence darken the living scene any longer ; but *somewhere*, they are actual existences, in the full reality of the properties they bore away with them. And reflect,—if sometimes the mind, in contemplative mode, feels an awful sense of evil—feels something at which it shudders and recoils, in but entering closely

among the very images of them, what would it be to be in their actual presence? to be plunged among them, with all their evil in immediate living manifestation and action? And those who are following them, in the same spirit and course, what do they think of being added to such an assembly? Do they expect to find them in a realm of peace? Or, that any heaven in the universe will smile auspicious over such a community? Or, that the continual accession to the dark host will exalt them into successful defiance of Almighty Justice? What do they think of the social condition, and the sympathies, of such an assemblage, continually augmented? which of all the charities of existence can live in a continual condensation of evil? can the effect be other than the mutual explosion of deadly flames?

They who are themselves going, as fast as time can carry them, toward another world, should consider whom, what class, they are going after, and to be added to. And in order to press this consideration powerfully on the mind, it will be wise to dwell sometimes on the memory of the wicked; always recollecting, as a warning excitement, that the same fallen nature, which appears under so dark an aspect and malediction in such a review,—that this very same nature is ours. And that for us there is an absolute necessity for the operation and the indwelling of the Divine Spirit, in order to secure that we shall be added to a better assembly, when we shall pass away to remain no longer but in memory on earth.

This gloomy part of the retrospect will, by contrast, add to the lustre of the more pleasing one—“*the memory of the Just.*”

There has been “*a multitude that no man can number*” bearing on earth, and bearing away from it, the true image of their Father in heaven;—of many nations and languages,—of every age of time,—and of all conditions in mortal life.

An infinite number of spots, if we may express it so, in time and place, have been marked by the fact of a just man,—in many instances more, or many, just men,—being there. The traveller in different portions of the earth is often, unknowingly, on a spot where a just man has stood,—walked—meditated—prayed,—perhaps died. It will sometimes occur to thought, when treading a long frequented path, how many have trodden it that are gone to heaven. A similar thought still more positively occurring in a place long dedicated to the true worship of God. The saints of God in the past time are presented as a general comprehensive object to our memory; while comparatively few of them are singly prominent in record or recollection,—we see with certainty, in the retrospect, a bright, ample appearance composed of their multitude; like that luminous tract in the starry heavens, where we cannot (with the unassisted eye) distinguish, individually, the stars, but know that it is an incalculable profusion of them that constitutes the appearance. There may be some spirit's eye to which this vast tract of dim light in the sky is all resolved into its distinct lustres. And who can tell whether good men may not at length receive so mighty an enlargement of faculty as to be empowered to note individually all the good men of their whole race? It must be a faculty capable of admitting a distinct perception of a vast variety of objects at once; so different from the present state of our mental being, in which we can give a pointed special attention to but one object at once. But surely there is no difficulty to conceive that there may be a grand change in this respect hereafter.

But, besides this view of "*the cloud of witnesses*," this innumerable assemblage, as it were confused into one appearance, we have many of "*the just*" retained to memory as individuals. Some that will be memorable all over the

Christian world, and to the end of time; Patriarchs;—Prophets;—Apostles;—the most eminent of the promoters of religion and truth, through the subsequent ages;—some of the martyrs;—the reformers;—the missionaries;—the philanthropists;—an illustrious array of the noblest servants of God, and benefactors of the world. And of more limited sphere, and in the private circle, some have been known to us who remain unalterably fixed and cherished in memory, in the character of “*the just*.” They abide there, and ever will, kept alive, as it were, the images, the examples, the personifications of what we approve, admire, and feel that we ought to love and to be.

Now, their memory “*is blessed*,” self-evidently so, for the mind blesses it, reverts to it with complacency, mingled with solemnity,—returns to it with delight from the sight of the living evil in the world, sometimes even prefers this silent society to the living good. We can devoutly bless God that they were such,—and that as such we have had the happiness to know some of them. They show, in the most evident and pleasing manner, the gracious connexion which God has constantly maintained with a sinful world. His uninterrupted connexion with it by justice and sovereign power has been manifest in mighty evidence: but his saints have been the peculiar illustration of his grace, his mercy, acting on this world. Not all the repulsion of our evil nature could prevent his benignity coming in operative contact with it. Here and there, as it were with his finger, instinct with vivifying energy, which emanated from it, he has touched the dead corrupted mass, and imparted life—and, wherever touched, it became sensible of the vital power; a soul rose up in spiritual life, to live for ever; and blessed the irresistible grace. Wherever such have been, there having been such has left a bright trace on the world,

to testify that the free mercy of God has been in communication with it;—and so, their “*memory is blessed.*”

It is so, again, when we consider them as practical illustrations, verifying examples of the excellence of genuine religion; that it is a noble thing in human nature, and makes, and alone makes, that nature noble;—that this is what redeems it to its station of being “*a little lower than the angels;*”—that whatever scoffers may say, or the vain world pretend to disbelieve, here is what has made such men as nothing else, under heaven, could or can. Here are the men that have been tried in all ways,—brought in conflict with every evil of the earth, and the principle was in them indestructible. The world and Satan have been compelled to acknowledge, “*These are not ours.*” True, the genuine, living examples have this honour in common with those who are become the objects of “*memory.*” But the difference in favour of the latter is, that the trial is completed,—the consummation is gained,—they shine “*full-orbed*” from heaven. From heaven, we say,—and their memory is blessed, under the consideration that they are what the earth has contributed to heaven;—that in them it has been shown that earth *may* send its inhabitants thither;—that there *was* here what was judged not fit to be long confined and detained here. They appear as a conquest gained in this world, and taken away from it by the powers above,—a sacred, happy colony transplanted thither.

Their “*memory is blessed,*” while we regard them as diminishing to our view the repulsiveness and horror of Death. Our Lord’s dying was the fact that threw out the mightiest agency to this effect. But, in their measure, his faithful disciples have done the same. When we contemplate them as having prepared for it with calm resolution,—as having approached it—multitudes with a tranquil

resignation and fortitude,—and very many with an animated exultation;—as having past it, and emerged in brightness beyond its gloom; they seem to shine back through the gloom, and make the shade less thick. It is not as if we were the *first* summoned to dare the solemn adventure. We have but to do what *they* have already done; and the consideration that they, the most excellent of the earth, were to do it;—next, to see how they have done it,—and then to look by faith to the consequences they have found;—this makes their “*memory*” an auxiliary to us against the fear of death. And whatever does that, is indeed a “*blessed*” thing. That “*memory*,” again, contributes to promote the sense of a social relation with the state beyond the grave; presenting to view, from the other side, a grand society, to which Christians here do stand in the noblest relations,—

“The saints on earth, and all the dead,
But one communion make.”

There is thus a medium of human interest and combination between the two so different regions; and the social sentiment can expand beyond the earth. While there cannot be a sensible intercommunication, a contemplative faith can carry a pious spirit ideally into the higher and happier society, so as to feel great delight,—a delight in which a certain mystical social element is felt to mingle. And then, this “*memory*” aids to vivify the anticipations of coming at length into actual communion,—to join some that have been personally known, and some of former ages, and distant lands.

Their “*memory is blessed*,” also, as combined with the whole progress of the cause of God on earth,—with its living agency through every stage. He has never, and nowhere, had a visible cause in the world, without putting

men in trust with it. There might be his own immediate interference,—there might, or not, be angels, visibly employed, but there were sure to be men. Think of what they have been employed and empowered to do,—in the propagation of truth,—in the incessant warfare against all manner of evil,—in the exemplification of all the virtues by which He could be honoured.

Thus their “*memory*” is inseparably associated with all the most “*blessed*” things through all time, and it partakes of the blessedness. All those things, come to our view with a human visage; and have, by that, a stronger interest and attraction for us, than if they had been mere, pure acts of the Divine Power. Especially the important benefits that have come into our own immediate lot, reflect benedictions on the memory of those who imparted them. This grateful recollection often enhances the sense of the value of the good so imparted, and very much conduces to perpetuate it.

And, now, is it not a reasonable object of Christian desire, to leave a memory that shall be “*blessed*?” Not a passion for vain-glory,—not that so extolled aspiring to endless fame. But a desire that the remembrance which will remain in the minds of those who are to survive or follow, should not be one causing pain, disapprobation, or shame. A wish to be, in remembrance, numbered with the faithful and zealous servants of God and Christ. A wish to be so associated with good imparted, as to render that good the dearer and the more effectual. A wish to remain, as long as remembered, a motive, an argument, an incitement to all good to those who follow,—thus to do good here after being gone hence. A wish to be remembered *so*, that it shall be, to some human hearts a delightful and attractive thought, that they shall meet again the object of their memory.

And let it not be a mortifying consideration, that, in

most instances the "*memory*" must be of very limited scope, and not perpetual duration. The "*memory*" of the good, with exceptions comparatively few, gradually declines into oblivion on earth, but their everlasting remembrance is with God. But, their existence—their living, happy reality—continues, and flourishes, and enlarges for ever; to have, also, the felicity of being ultimately brought again into the society of those in whose minds they have left a cherished remembrance.

LECTURE LV.

THE CONSIDERATION OF DEATH.

DEUTERONOMY xxxii. 29.

“ O that they would consider their latter end.”

LATELY, in a social hour, I heard it proposed, as a question curious as well as serious,—to account for the general insensibility of men to the grand fact that they are mortal ;—this being universally known to be an infallible certainty, how does it happen that most men, habitually, think of it very little, and are very little affected by it ?

We might employ a few moments beneficially, in, first, taking account of the fact itself (of this insensibility,)—next, seeing what can be brought in explanation,—and last, briefly remonstrating against this insensibility.

That there is, very generally, a strange want of reflection and concern respecting our condition as mortal, is most apparent, in many plain familiar proofs. Perhaps nothing in the world, that appears so out of consistency, is so obvious. The fact of a whole race dead, from the beginning of time to the present generation, comes with but little impression on us, except at occasional moments. In surveying history, it is with the men of past ages, *as living*, that our thoughts are busy. The thought, that they are all dead, and that this fact tells us what we also shall be, may not occur through many chapters. But there is no need of illustrations of such wide reference. The insensibility may be shown in more familiar exemplifications. Persons inhabiting a house of considerable age—how often are they reminded that persons formerly occupying its apartments,

treading its avenues, are dead, with a pointed application of this thought to themselves? And so of places of worship, and of other resort. But there is still more immediate evidence. How little effect, in the way of reflection on ourselves, appears to be produced by the instances and spectacles of actual mortality; by the termination of a life in our near neighbourhood, or among those whom we well knew! Persons frequently and officially conversant with circumstances of death are often very remarkably estranged from reflection upon it, as applied to themselves. And so are a large proportion of those who are drawn as spectators of a funeral procession, or an interment;—how many, in the silence of serious thought, say, “That is the situation that I shall be in, ere long!” And let even persons not of the thoughtless tribe, confess how their minds have been affected, at the removal of a neighbour or acquaintance, or at the last office performed to the departed. Can they say, they felt their minds powerfully arrested by the event, or the immediate spectacle? that solemn thoughts poured in upon them, freely and fast, precluding, for a while, all trifling ones? that their living principle was turned, as it were, into sympathy with death? that involuntarily they were realizing to themselves, with profound emotion, their own cessation of life, consignment to the dust, and entrance on a world unseen? Will they not, on the contrary, confess that it has required a great effort to attain the solemnity of reflection;—that they had to strive with their minds to fix their thoughts; that there was a great inaptitude to make the case their own? Have they not wondered that the admonition of their own mortality was not more emphatic, and that they could so very soon recover the customary tenor of feeling? May we not add, as a general fact, the very small effect of the memory of the departed, in the way of admonition of our own mortality? There may

be many recollections of what they were, and what they did, and of our intercourse with them, and yet few impressive reflections turning on ourselves as to follow them. There is a sort of quiet sentiment to this effect—"that they had completed their appointed time, and *their* time was not *ours*,"—and there it ends. We are independent of their destiny,—are companions for the living,—have the business of life to prosecute,—and so, we are little disturbed by the united warning call of many departed.

Consider again,—how little and seldom we are struck with the reflection, how many things we are exposed to that might cause death! what little things might be fatal! how many instances we hear of! how possible to befall us! how marvellous that we are preserved! But we go forward just as if none of these smaller poisoned arrows of death were flying, or of the greater darts either. None of them has struck us, and therefore we live in a thoughtless presumption of impunity indefinitely.

Observe, too, how soon a recovery from danger sets aside the serious thought of death. Suppose a narrow and providential escape from a sudden peril of violent death; what is the course of feeling subsequently? Or the gradual recovery from illness that very seriously threatened to be fatal. We had most impressive thoughts of death then. But, there is a favourable turn,—small but sensible amendment,—it gradually advances,—and in the same proportion the solemn idea of death recedes, diminishes. The frowning spectre fades into a mist at the dawning of the day. So that even before the complete recovery to health all the strong serious impressiveness of the thought of death is gone. In some instances, the very remembrance that it *was* impressive and alarming, seems to have vanished.

Observe, again,—how schemes are formed for a long future time, with as much interest, and as much anticipating

confidence, as if there were no such thing in the world as death. One has looked at the mortal, and listened to him, while he has been calculating, that in five years, or in ten, the progress would reach such a point; in five or ten more it would be completed, in such and such a result; confidently calculating on his life to continue and flourish through all this progress.

We see, on all hands, how business, pleasure, and even sin, are prosecuted with an earnestness and systematic pertinacity, not in the least degree checked or mitigated by any thought of death; hardly checked, even when associates or rivals are seized and carried away! Even the old age of a person previously thoughtless, seems not necessarily to bring any serious reflections on this subject. Looking at mankind generally, do you not think that a very large part of the time of most of them passes wholly clear from any monitory interference of the thought of their mortality? There even are some on whom the very thought itself does not, probably, once intrude in long spaces of time—during many weeks or months. Look at those living beings, that have (as we suppose, and perhaps they would affirm it, if they were questioned) *souls*, actuating those bodies! Think of them, as knowing themselves infallibly appointed to die, and yet advancing toward that event in the miraculous fatuity of never being disturbed by any thought of the subject! Look at another large proportion, who do sometimes advert to this their solemn destiny, with a temporary feeling of seriousness or sadness, but will not dwell upon it; and do not seek to have the habit of their souls, and their plan of life ordered to a consistency with it. And last, there is the much smaller class of persons who do seriously desire and aim at this,—and *they* have to reproach themselves often and bitterly, that they are not under a more powerful and abiding influence of this great prospect.

Now all this appears very strange—and that should mean—that it is not easy to comprehend how and why it should be so. In making a few suggestions, in the way of accounting for it, we might say, First, that our Creator would, in wisdom, insert in the human mind a principle counteractive, in some degree, to the influence of this prospect of death,—in such a degree, that it should not have the utmost possible influence which it might seem adapted to have. For, it would seem, that so grand and awful a fact in prospect, with the uncertainty how soon it may be realized, might operate with an influence indefinite, unlimited, and altogether overpowering. To be under the appointment to have, not very long hence, the very constitution of our being dissolved,—the only visible palpable part of it, turned to dust,—to be taken out, in an instant, by one act of irresistible power, from all connexion with this world,—to be transferred to another scene of existence, and under circumstances inconceivably solemn,—it would seem that the *entire*, appropriate influence of such a prospect might arrest and suppress the whole active economy of this world. Now God would certainly place in our constitution a principle to limit this influence, so that it should not be inconsistent with our state in this life. But then, how vastly short would that partial measured counteraction be, of the actual counteraction which does repel and throw off so nearly the whole salutary influence of the prospect of death! The difference between these two is the reproach, the madness, and the ruin of our race.

And when it is asked, “And how comes this to be?” the general explanation is that which accounts for everything that is wrong, namely, the fearful, *radical depravity of our nature*. And are there any that recoil at this often repeated phrase and doctrine? Let them collect their sense to look at the case in question,—a world of beings living all under

the doom of such a thing as death is, and most of them taking no thought or care about it!

But, to assign this general cause, does not suffice to the inquiry. There doubtless are special causes, through which that great general one operates, availing itself of them. One of these may be, *the perfect distinctness of life and death*. They do not partially co-exist, in the individual, like imperfect health with a degree of illness. We have life absolutely, and death not at all; so that we can make no experimental comparison between them; we cannot know, by means of the one, what the other is. It is only by the entire giving up of life that we can really know anything of death. And, therefore, it is an object solely of belief, and not of any possible mode of immediate apprehension. Besides, death is a single act or event, and, therefore, cannot be compared with a state.

Again; we think that even the *certainty*, and the *universality*, of death, may be numbered among the causes tending to withdraw men's thoughts from it. Consider, that an important matter, hanging in doubt, has great power of excitement from that very cause. The question, "Will it be, or not? how will the event decide?" keeps the feelings of the soul in agitation,—raises alternate hope and fear,—produces a wakeful, anxious expecting state of mind; in all this, the thoughts are irresistibly drawn to the object. But when there remains no doubt how the event is to be, all this subsides. And even though the decision be the worst that was feared, the evil, accomplished or expected, may really be less thought of, than while there appeared a possibility of avoiding or averting it. The mind sinks into a kind of dull fatalism. The *certainty* of death precludes all this excitement.

And then the *universality*. This takes away all inquisitive wondering who may, and who may not (and why the

difference), be appointed to the fate. It prevents, too, all invidious comparison, with the elation on the one side, and mortification on the other. It leaves no place for envy, jealousy, or competition; leaves no matter even for comparison. Now, that which is of a nature to excite and keep in activity these passions is certain to be an object of great attention and interest, and *vice versâ*. Death has no hold on a large proportion of those feelings by which the human mind is kept in a state of attention and interest toward an object. No man, in a company, can say within himself, which of us shall be alive ages after the others of us shall be reduced to dust?" No one has against his enemy the hope that he may die, but himself live. There is no sense of inequality, stimulated to intense interest by wondering and wishing it could but be known where the advantage lies. No one's death, when it takes place, is the practical answer to any curiosity respecting *whether* he was to die.

We might specify another thing as one of the causes sought for; that is, the utter inability to form any defined idea of the manner of existence after death. The thoughts sent onward to that boundary of life, cannot stop there; the mere termination itself is nothing; they look beyond; but beyond is thickest darkness, as often as they go there; so that there is, as it were, nothing shown to draw the mind thither to look over the limit. And it is not in the disposition of the mind to look in the direction of that which it can form no definite idea of, (we do not prolong our look on absolute darkness) especially while the mind has, close around it, a crowd of things of which it has a distinct and vivid idea, with great interest of its passions concerning them. There may be added to this, our having no communications with the persons who have passed through death.

But after all, the chief causes that there is so little

thought and concern on this great subject, are of a much more obvious kind, and involving guilt.

One is a general presumption of having long to live.

In each stage of life, still this beguiled confidence is indulged. In imagination the prospect stretches away into indefinite remoteness. Death must be somewhere yonder, it is acknowledged, but, far beyond the sensible horizon; and it is willingly left shrouded in the mists and clouds. Some period long hence will be the proper time to think of it; but there is ample space of privilege and exemption between. This presumed wide space diminishes the greatness and importance of the object; and thus diminished to insignificance it has no power to compel men's thoughts or serious cares. This pernicious presumption of long life is indulged in spite of all evidence of life's uncertainty, and of its actual brevity, in a very great proportion of instances. It would be a striking disclosure, if we could know the amount of the difference between the average measure of time that the people now alive will actually live, and that measure which would be the collective amount of what they presume on living.

Another great cause of the thoughtlessness and insensibility, (indeed it is both cause and effect,) is that men occupy their whole soul and life with things to preclude the thought of its end. They mingle their whole being with the world's elements so that their spiritual nature is lost, and cannot, in this gross compound, be come at,—cannot be touched or found by any solemn subject applied. They have thus a disastrous protection against the thought of death, amidst employments, projects, amusements, society, news, and all that the world is crowded with. In conjunction and co-operation with this cause, there is—an aversion to dwell in contemplation on those things to which death leads; for example, eternity, the appearance before the

Divine Majesty, the great award, the entrance on a state of retribution. We may add to these causes, an inadequate, contracted notion of what is necessary as a preparation for the event.

And, to give full force to all these causes, there is, in a large proportion of men, a formal, systematic endeavour to keep off the thought of death. How striking if it could be known in how many instances, within one week, in this great city, this effort has been made, and with success! A strong action to turn the thoughts in another direction,—an amusing book seized—or a hasty recourse to occupation,—or an excursion,—or a going into a gay circle,—possibly a plunge into intemperance. And all the unfortunate things that may have befallen, have not been a measure of calamity equal to that involved in the *success* of this endeavour!

Such are the causes in operation to keep men from considering their latter end. We have hardly a moment left for the topics of admonition and remonstrance against indulging such a habit of the soul. But let it be impressed upon us, that to end our life is the mightiest event that awaits us in this world. And it is that which we are living but to come to. It holds out a grand protest against being absorbed and lost in this world. It is the termination of a period confessedly introductory and probationary. Without thinking of it, often and with deep interest, there is no possibility that our scheme and course of life should be directed to the supreme purpose of life. To have been thoughtless of it, then, will ultimately be an immense calamity; it will be to be in a state unprepared for it. The settled indisposition, therefore, to think of it, should smite us with the conviction of something greatly and ominously wrong. If it be fear that deters, consider whether prolonged estrangement from the subject will remove or lessen the just causes for that fear. And consider, that there is a

sovereign antidote against the fear of Death. There is ONE that has himself yielded to Death, in order to vanquish it for us, and take its terrors away. The Son of God took on him our mortal nature, "*that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were, all their life-time, in bondage.*"

LECTURE LVI.

PRACTICAL ATHEISM.

EPHESIANS ii. 12.

“ Without God in the world.”

WE have often occasion to wonder that brief expressions, descriptive of actual conditions of men, do not strike us far more forcibly, do not convey more to thought, and awake more emotion. For example, suppose it to be said, “At this very time, this hour, even this minute, a great number of human beings are dying.” A positive fact; but,—what is it to die? what would it appear if I were with the dying? what, if I were in the act of dying? But, a great number are in this very situation!—think! Following their flight from the world, suppose it said, “A multitude of human beings are now in Heaven!” But suppose it said (another solemn fact), “A vast number are now in Hell!” But revert to things on earth; let it be said—“Enemies to God—there is a prodigious army of such;”—or our text, *“ Without God in the world.”* Think what a description, and, applicable to individuals without number! If it had been, “without friends—without shelter—without food”—that would have had a gloomy sound; but—*“ without God!”* Without Him! that is, in no happy relation to him who is the very origin, support, and life of all things;—without him, who can make good flow to his creatures from an infinity of sources;—without him, whose favour possessed, is the best, the sublimest, of all delights, all triumphs, all glories;—without him, who can confer an

eternal felicity. Without Him! but, how is he lost, withdrawn? What do those under so sad a destitution value and seek instead? But, what will anything or all things be worth in his absence? Without him, too, in a world where the human creature knows there is a mighty and continual conspiracy against his welfare. We fall unspeakably below the true and dreadful emphasis of the expression, after we have given our utmost aggravation to its significance. And still it is but the description of an actual condition. And should not each one be intent on having good assurance that it is not *his* condition?

It may be instructive to consider a little to what states of mind the description is applicable, and what a wrong and calamitous thing the condition is in all of them. We need not dwell on that condition of humanity in which there is no notion of Deity at all,—the condition of some outcast savage tribes. Think of souls destitute of the very idea! not one idea exalted and resplendent above the rest,—casting a glory sometimes across the little intellectual field; (as if, in the outward world of nature, they had no visible heaven),—the spirit nothing to go out to, beyond its clay walls, but the immediately surrounding elements, and other creatures of the same order. But think of a rational, an intelligent nature, debased, in these remote sections, to so melancholy an extreme!

The adorers of false gods may just be named as coming under the description. There is, almost throughout the race, a feeling in men's souls that belongs to the Divinity. But think how all manner of objects, real and imaginary, have been supplicated to accept and absorb this feeling, that the true God may not take it. Men have been willing to fill the world, the universe, with gods, and do homage to them all, rather than acknowledge, and adore, and love, "*the blessed and only Potentate.*" And a confirmed

negation of him, to the mind and the heart of man, is the curse inflicted, in return, by all these infernal fallacies.

It is too obvious almost to be worth noting, how plainly the description applies itself to those who persuade themselves that there is no God. We may believe some of them, on their own testimony, that they have attained to this deliberate opinion. To them, there is no Supreme Intelligence in the Universe. Mind, Spirit, would evidently be the glory of all existence, a superlatively precious and noble kind of being; and then one Supreme Spirit, self-existent, and the author of all other existence, would be the transcendent object for every admiring, adoring, and devoted sentiment. To the Atheist there is *nothing* in place of that which is the supremacy of all existence and glory. The Divine Spirit and all spirits being abolished, he is left amidst masses and systems of matter, without a First Cause, ruled by chance, or by a blind mechanical impulse of what he calls Fate; and, as a little composition of atoms, he is himself to take his chance; for a few moments of conscious being, and then to be no more for ever. And yet, in this infinite prostration of all things, he feels an elation of intellectual *pride*!

But, we have to consider the text in an application much more important to *us*, and to men in general; with a most settled belief of the Divine Existence, they may be "*without God in the world.*" This is too truly and sadly the applicable description, when this belief and its object do not maintain habitually the ascendant influence over us; over the whole system of our thoughts, feelings, purposes, and actions. That there is such a Being, is a principle that evidently claims to interfere in everything. My very existence is from him, and depends on him; all it contains, and all it acts, must therefore be in a solemn relation to him. And everything, in my spirit and conduct, should

acknowledge that relation. That relation is to be maintained in such a manner that I may be in harmony and conformity with him. That relation constitutes the law of good and evil, and fixes an awful sanction on the difference. In an endless series of things,—that there is such a Being, and that I belong to him, is a reason *for* one thing, and *against* another. The thought of him is to be associated with all these things, and its influence to be preponderant. “Thus—and thus—I think—and wish—and will—and act—*because*—there is a God.” Now for me to forget or disregard all this, is to remove myself, as far as I can, from God,—to cause, as far as I am able, that to me there is no God. It is a practical conformity to the Atheist’s speculative disbelief. Let, then, a man ask himself, “If I proceed thus, ought not my opinion to be that of the Atheist?” And let each man examine and judge, whether there be many things in his soul and his life, which require this opinion, in order to his being consistent. And let us all examine ourselves, whether we live under a prevailing, powerful, all-pervading sentiment of God; or whether the thought of him be slight, remote, uninfluential, —and very often absent altogether.

We wish we could describe with distinctness, several of the ways, or forms, in which this disregard of God is seen to prevail.

For one; we are placed amidst the amazing scene of his Works, extending on all sides, from the point where we stand, to far beyond anything *we* can distinctly conceive of INFINITY; in a diversity, which not eternal duration will suffice for any creature to take account of all; having, within one day, one hour, one instant, operations, changes, appearances, to which the greatest angel’s calculating faculty would be nothing; combining design—order—beauty—sublimity—utility. Such is the scene to be

contemplated. But, now, while our attention wanders over it, or fixes on parts of it, do we regard it but as if it were something existing by itself? Can we glance over the earth, and into the wilderness of worlds in infinite space, without being impressed with the solemn thought, that all this is but the sign and proof of something infinitely more glorious than itself? Are we not reminded,—“this is a production of his almighty power;”—“that is an adjustment of his all-comprehending intelligence and foresight;”—“there is a glimmer, a ray, of his beauty, his glory;”—“there an emanation of his benignity;”—“and there some fiery trace of his justice;”—“but for him, all this would never have been;—and if, for a moment, his pervading energy were, by his will, restrained or suspended,—what would it all be then?” Not to have some such perceptions and thoughts, accompanied by devout sentiment, is so far to be “*without God in the world.*” And that there should be men who can survey the creation with a scientific enlargement of intelligence, and then say, “*there is no God,*” is one of the most hideous phenomena in the world.

Again, the text is applicable to those who have no solemn recognition of God’s all-disposing government and Providence; who have no thought of the course of things but just as going on; going on some way or other, just as it can; to whom it appears abandoned to a strife and competition of various mortal powers; or surrendered to something they call general laws,—and these blended with chance; who have perhaps a crude Epicurean notion of exempting the Divine Being from the infinite toil and care of such a charge; or, think they see things managed so wrong that there cannot be a constant interference of sovereign power and wisdom. They do not discern and understand the indications manifest in some instances; and have no faith with respect to the darker parts of the system. With respect to their own lot,

they feel themselves as committed in an unaided struggle and fight with difficulties, enemies, and accidents; and so have no habitual trust or hope in the providential wisdom and care. If God be in the world with an all presiding Providence, those who do not acknowledge it, really and practically, are "*without Him in the world.*"

The text is a description of all those who are forming or pursuing their scheme of life and happiness independently of Him. They do not consult his counsel or will as to what that scheme should be, in its ends or means. They *will* have a plan of pursuit and well-being to please themselves, without much inquiring or caring whether it be one that he will approve. They, perhaps, slightly wish that it could please both, but "*it shall please me;*" "*this I like—and that I covet—and the other would be the very summit of happiness, no matter whether He has signified 'a more excellent way.'*" And then the confidence of realizing happiness on such a plan! His favour, his blessing, are not absolutely indispensable; we can be happy, leaving him out of the account. The probabilities—the presumptions rather—of life, health, and success, are in our favour, according to the ordinary course of things, and we will embark on this. For the present we can do without him; if our schemes fail, we can but turn to him at last. So he is forgotten, and the deluded schemer goes into the world, and after it, with all his might, "*without God in the world.*" But if a brief illumination of truth might glare out upon a man, and his schemes and prospects, what amazement and horror would seize him, to find himself thus impiously employed! thus presuming to work out for himself a chief good of his existence; carelessly, independently, and in defiance of Him that is the Sovereign Good!—in effect, saying, "I'll make trial whether they were not in the right

who were reproached with '*loving and serving the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever.*' "

The text is a description of those who have but a slight sense of universal accountableness to God as the supreme authority ;—who have not a conscience, constantly looking and listening to him, and testifying for him ;—who proceed as if this world were a province absolved from the strictness of his dominion and laws ;—who will not apprehend that there is his will and warning affixed to everything ;—who will not submissively ask, "What dost *thou* pronounce on this ?" To be insensible to the Divine character as law-giver, rightful authority, and judge, is truly to be "*without God in the world ;*" for thus every action of the soul and the life assumes that he is absent, or not exists.

This insensibility of accountableness exists almost entire—a stupefaction of conscience—in very many minds. But in many others there is a disturbed, yet inefficacious feeling. And might not some of these be disposed to say, "We are *not* without God in the world, as an awful authority and judge,—for, we are followed, and harassed, and persecuted, sometimes quite to misery, by the thought of him in this character.—We cannot go on peacefully in the way our inclinations lead,—a portentous sound alarms us,—a formidable spectre encounters us,—though we still persist."

The case is here that men *wish* to be "*without God in the world ;*" they would, in preference to any other prayer, implore him to depart, "*for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.*" They would be willing to resume the enterprise of the rebellious angels, if there were any hope. "Oh, that he with his laws and judgments, were infinitely far away !" To be thus with God, is, in the most emphatical sense, to be without him—without him as a friend, approver, and patron. Each thought of him tells the soul, *who* it is

that it is without! and *who* it is that, in a very fearful sense, it never can be without!

The description belongs to that state of mind in which there is no communion with him, maintained, or even sought, with cordial aspiration;—no devout, ennobling converse held with him; no conscious reception of delightful impressions—sacred influences—suggested sentiments;—no pouring out of the soul in fervent desires, for his illuminations, his compassion, his forgiveness, his transforming operations;—no earnest, penitential, hopeful pleading in the name of the glorious Intercessor;—no solemn, affectionate dedication of the whole being; no animation and vigour obtained for the labours and the warfare of a Christian life. But, how lamentable to be thus “*without God!*” Consider it in one single view only, that of the *loneliness* of a human soul in this destitution. All other beings are necessarily (shall we express it so?) extraneous to the soul; they may communicate with it, but they are still separate, and without it; an intermediate vacancy keeps them for ever asunder, so that the soul must be, in a sense, in an insuperable and eternal solitude—that is, as to all creatures. But, on the contrary, God has an all-pervading power—can interfuse, as it were, his very essence through the being of his creatures,—can cause himself to be apprehended and felt as absolutely *in* the soul; (“*dwelling in us and walking in us,*”)—such an intercommunion as is, by the nature of things, impossible between created beings. And thus the interior central loneliness, the solitude of the soul, is banished, by a perfectly intimate presence, which imparts the most affecting sense of society—a society, a communion, which imparts life and joy, and may continue in perpetuity. To men completely immersed in the world, this might appear a very abstracted and enthusiastic notion of felicity; but, to those who have in any measure attained it, the idea of its

loss would give the most emphatical sense of the expressions, "*without God in the world.*"

The terms are a true description, also, of the state of mind, in which there is no habitual anticipation of the great event of going at length into the presence of God—in which, there is an absence of the thought of being with him in *another "world"*—of being with him in judgment—and whether to be with him for ever;—not considering that he awaits us somewhere,—that the whole movement of life is absolutely towards him,—that the course of life is deciding in what manner we shall appear in his presence;—not thinking what manner of fact that will be,—what experience, what consciousness, what emotions;—not regarding it as the grand purpose of our present state of existence that we may attain a final dwelling in his presence.

One more, and the last, application we would make of the description is, to those who, while professing to retain God in their thoughts with a religious regard, frame the religion, in which they are to acknowledge him, according to their own speculation and fancy. Thus, many rejecters of Divine revelation have professed, nevertheless, a reverential homage to the Deity; but the God of their faith was to be such as their sovereign reason chose to feign; and, therefore, the theory and mode of their religion was entirely arbitrary. But, if revelation be true, the simple question is, will the Almighty acknowledge your feigned god for himself, and admit your religion as equivalent to that which he has declared and defined? If he should not, you are "*without God in the world.*"

This is unavoidably, the condition, also, of those who reject anything which he has declared essential to the relation of being in acceptance and peace with him. If this happy connexion be, as we believe, appointed to subsist

alone through a Mediator constituted as a substitute, sacrifice, and atonement, then the rejection of this constitution abolishes the connecting medium between man and God,—and the one is “*without*” the other.

Such are the general illustrations, faintly exhibited, of the grave and formidable import of the text. We intended briefly to add a few practical exemplifications of the bad and miserable effects of such estrangement from God as seen in youth,—in the active busy occupation with worldly concerns,—in general social converse,—in times of temptation,—in situations of affliction and sorrow,—in old age,—and in death.

And, now, surely this is not the condition for us to be content with for one hour,—for us, who are cast for a short period upon a scene of vanities, dangers, and ruins, with a nature full of want, helplessness, and disorder. Content! with this destitution, while *He* is here, the Almighty Power—while we can find him,—accost him,—importune him. Let us implore him not to permit our spirits to be detached from him, abandoned, exposed, and lost;—not to let them be trying to feed their immortal fires on transitory sustenance, but to attract them, and exalt them, and hold them in his communion for ever.

LECTURE LVII.

MAN'S DEVICES AND GOD'S COUNSEL.

PROVERBS xix. 21.

“ There are many devices in a man's heart ; nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord, it shall stand.”

COMPARISONS between God and man are continually occurring in the Scriptures, and in all religious books and discourse. There is, from this a possible wrong consequence, against which we have to guard ; namely, that of lessening our sense of the infinite disparity of the objects. Whatever may be the distance which is expressly signified in the terms of the comparison, the fact that they may be, and are, compared at all, tends to reduce our conception of the greatness of the Almighty. It is so, when the comparison is that of the parallel or likeness ; as in goodness, sanctity, perfection. And it is so, too, when it is that of contrast ; for, though the contrast be meant to display the immense difference, yet the mere circumstance of the *conjunction* of the ideas of a diminutive creature—an atom of existence, and an Infinite Being, has somewhat of the effect, if we may so express it, of keeping down the idea of that infinity. Two objects that we can take in the same view, do not seem infinitely different. We shall do well to endeavour against this disadvantageous effect, by rising to the contemplation of the Most High in his own absolute nature, as above all comparison. And our doing this sometimes, in a solemn and devotional spirit, will contribute to our receiving a stronger impression of the magnitude of the difference, when we are

called to contemplate Man and God in contrast. Our text calls us to behold them in this relation. "*There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord, it shall stand.*"

"*A man's heart*" is a little world, full of scheming and business. It is *that* that keeps the individual, and the mighty world of mankind, alive and in motion. If we might suppose an almighty power, by one great act, to quash, at once, all the devices in all men's hearts,—what a dead scene the world would become! something analogous to what Mohammedan legends have fabled of a city where all the people were suddenly turned to stone, to be seen there still in that state, far within some untraversed desert.

If we could have a full inspection of one man's heart!—but each man may of his own! Let him review its "*devices*,"—its schemes, its designs,—in their succession. There was one, on which he expended ten thousand, fifty thousand distinct acts of thought,—and, with those thoughts, mingled his affections, and passions, earnestly busy. Another, and perhaps still another, followed, keeping his whole soul in action, as if the sovereign good of his existence had depended on it. At some junctures there may have been a plurality and rivalry of schemes, crowding his heart, and agitating it almost to distraction. But perhaps he cannot long employ himself in recollecting past schemes in quietness, for the stir that is kept up in his mind by a present one. There is, then, a thing *now* working the machinery of his mind. Let him observe how it puts him in trains of thought,—how it draws his affections around it, and, as it were, eats them up; calls him off from other things which he has to attend to. In the same manner, another man,—and the next,—and still the next, and so through the endless multitudes of the race.

Advert to the variety in the kinds of "*devices*," and in

men's temper and manner with respect to them. Many of these schemes have a most insignificant object,—some a grave and ambitious one. Many of them are of very short reach,—others planned for the attainment of a distant object, through a long course of accomplishment, not to be completed, perhaps, till after the death of the schemers. Some men are very communicative of their hearts' "*devices*;" so full of them, delighted with them, that they must talk, and enlarge, as if the hearers had none of their own to be interested about. Some are close, reserved, dark,—from the pride, it may be, of having schemes and thoughts all their own;—or, because, their designs are such as will not bear to be disclosed. Some are eager and hasty in their prosecution; others can proceed in their purpose with coolness, caution, and patient perseverance,—wait for opportunities,—vary their expedients. In short, all diversities that there are of human disposition, give their characters, respectively, to the heart's "*devices*," and to the manner of endeavouring their accomplishment.

Now suppose, just for a moment, that all these devices of all men could be brought out in full manifestation! Then, you would have human nature displayed, in its real quality. What manner of spectacle would it be? But suppose, further, that all these "*devices*" could be realized, or were realized, that is, accomplished. What a world you would have then! But it is only for a moment that we *can* suppose such a thing; because there is an infinite contrariety in these "*devices*." In an infinity of cases, one man's device cannot be accomplished compatibly with the accomplishment of another's. It may be doubted whether more than half of the cherished designs of all human hearts be not in this predicament. In many instances, men are mutually aware of this; each of two persons knows the other's design, and that the success of the other's would infallibly be the frus-

tration of his own. In other cases, they do not know, but suspect, this mortal contrariety. In numberless others, it exists, though unknown and unsuspected. Now, supposing all men could be set loose to accomplish in the most direct way what their hearts are devising, what would be the consequence? We have partial illustrations in the wars almost continual among nations or potentates;—in the violent strifes and quarrels which occur between little portions of the community, or individuals;—in daring acts of wrong or revenge. Consider what a grand object of study and provision it has been, throughout all civilized, or even half-civilized society, through all ages, to put a restraint on the execution of the devices of men's hearts. Consider the immense labour of legislation,—the vast array of preventions and securities,—the universal conviction that there is devising in men's hearts what would be ruinous if carried into action.

But, what a consideration it is, that "*the devices of a man's heart*," taken altogether, are his scheme for being happy. And so, the great collective whole of the "*devices*" of all hearts, constitutes the grand complex scheme of the human race for their happiness.

Such is the vast confused total of the devices which the Omniscient Searcher of hearts has to look upon, in this world. And while he sees every part and the whole, his single immense will,—his one all-comprehending system of design, is co-extended (shall we say?) with the entire breadth of the scene,—confronting it at every point, and, indeed, stretches away beyond it to infinity,—like the sky, expanded beyond our earth to other worlds. So that, to every device of all hearts, his "*counsel*," his design, exists parallel, whether in coincidence or opposition. In other words, respecting the object of every device, he has *his* design. Now there is a world where also this is the case,

but where every "*device*," or design, in the thoughts of his creatures is coincident with his. Glorious state! but how lamentably otherwise in *this* world!

The text plainly implies a great disconformity,—a want of coalescence between the designs of Man and God; an estranged spirit of design on the part of Man. And the case actually is so in the world. It is so in two ways, or rather, perhaps, say degrees; for many of the designs in men's hearts are formed *independently* of God,—many *in contrariety* to him.

First; independently of Him. In what proportion of men's internal devisings may we conjecture that there is any real acknowledgment of God? One in ten? One in twenty? In beginning to entertain the design, there is no question made, Will this be approved by Him? "It pleases *me*, and that's enough." It is not considered, that the scheme can come to no real good but as put under his direction. It is not considered, that our powers, our means, our life, for the prosecution, are wholly dependent on Him. There is a thoughtless assumption, "I shall live, doubtless, long enough for any such designs. My means are so and so;—competent to the purpose, I hope;—opportunities, such and such, may be reckoned on;—nothing extraordinary is likely to happen to frustrate. If I *should* meet with ill fortune, why, it cannot be helped." The whole devising and prosecution are in a spirit just as if there were no such thing as Providence, to aid or defeat. Of course, there is no committing of the concern to God for his direction and blessing. "It's all my own affair, for better and worse." And there is no principle in the mind, preparing it to be grateful to Him for success, or submissive in the event of failure. Now is this a false description, as applied to nineteen of twenty parts of the devisings of men's hearts? It is deplorable, the while, thus to see dependent,

frail, short-sighted creatures, confidently taking on themselves the counsel, execution, and hazard, of their schemes for being happy, in the very presence, and as in contempt, of the all-wise and Almighty Director!

Secondly. But even this is not the worst; man's heart entertains many devices *in contrariety* to God. In thoughtless and criminal ignorance, it admits suggestions of designs which it ought instantly to perceive to be in opposition to his declared will,—to startle at, as at the betrayed visages of evil spirits. But it can deliberately adopt them, and set its faculties on adjusting the scheme, even when it does know the device to be against the Divine approbation. It can prolong upon it the best exertions of thought to mature it, under the consciousness that to seek the Divine aid and blessing upon it would be a flagrant absurdity. It can resolve upon it conclusively, under the certainty that the Almighty, if he do not blast it with failure, will punish both its success and the iniquity of devising it. Man's heart, therefore, can cherish "*devices*," which must, sometimes, involve a rebellious emotion of displeasure, almost resentment, that there is a Sovereign Lord, whose "*counsel shall stand*."

What a sublime and awful fact, that all this while, there is in one other Mind, which has the knowledge and command of all things, a fixed design, respecting them all, a design paramount to all designs and devices. Look at the vast busy multitude, each intent on his scheme! and then think of *Him*, serene in boundless and eternal power, surveying all this confusion of schemes, and certain that *his* will be accomplished! Think of the sovereign principle of wisdom and power in his counsel—the principle which makes all schemes of his creatures subservient to his design, whether by their fulfilment or their frustration. Think what millions of these devices break up, and are nothing;

but both their formation and annihilation contribute something to his supreme purpose. Millions are in progress toward a positive result; which result, whatever it be, will be taken into *his* intended and infallible result. How many men will, eventually, be amazed to see the issue of their schemes appearing as a part of his final success; having had no such intention,—having devised them in perfect thoughtlessness of Him, or, perhaps, in a disposition consciously adverse to his will.

It might be beneficial, in our meditations, sometimes, to bring down such general ideas into particular exemplifications. A mighty assemblage of such particulars would come into our view from the scripture records; for example, the “*device*” of Joseph’s brethren,—of Balak,—of Ahitophel,—of Haman,—of the enemies of Daniel,—of Herod,—and even of Judas Iscariot himself. This last “*device*” of the heart was so pre-eminently execrable that it is described by the expression of—“*Satan entering into him.*” And often, if wicked men, conceiving their designs, could suddenly be made sensible of their quality, they would be smitten with the horrible consciousness of having admitted, as it were, a devil into their souls,—prompting them to the execution,—and, in that very impulse, pushing them toward Hell.

In adverting to many of these “*devices,*” we may observe, that the counsel of the Lord is, sometimes, not to prevent the design taking effect, in the first instance. He shows, that he can let men bring their iniquitous purposes into effect, and then seize that very effect, reverse its principle of agency, and make it produce immense unintended good. The wicked deviser prepares a poison, and puts the quality of his soul in it to make it intense; God can take this, and make it applicable to a purpose beneficially remedial. A malignant persecutor performs his intention of exterminating a number of Christians: God makes the

"blood of the martyrs the seed of the church." But, be it always remembered, that the evil deviser will have no benefit of God's overruling action; as to him the thing will ever be such as the intention was; he will not be allowed to plead, "Good has, according to God's own judgment, resulted,—let it go to my account." He cannot say, at the last day, "See here, there are thousands of saints who became such, in one sense, in consequence of what I devised and executed."

Thus, in many instances, God permits, for his own purposes, the success, immediately considered, of evil "*devices*." But, in many others, he directly frustrates them, as in the case of Haman. How many instances have we read or heard of, in which, some sudden turn has exploded and blasted both the scheme and the man,—some most unlikely exposure,—some incident of intervention apparently casual, but in its effect, conspicuously providential. Often the device has not merely failed, but recoiled vindictively, retributively, on the man who had formed it. "*The counsel of the Lord*" predominates. And think how many "*devices*" of man's heart there are, at this hour, for this sovereign counsel to predominate over. We might say to any man, "Consider, seriously, your internal designs, and then remember whose counsel there is besides! Reflect on your favourite device,—Can you appeal to Him for his approbation? Are you scheming something which conscience tells you is wrong? Consider!" At this hour there are men devising projects of injustice against their fellow mortals. Will they, can they, have any real good of these designs, while "*the righteous Lord*" maintains his power? To some men, the children of God are objects of special malice, "*and the wicked plotteth against the just, but the Lord shall laugh at him, for he seeth that his day is coming.*" There may be a man, at this very time, contriv-

ing how he may traduce the character, motives, or conduct, of some faithful servant of the Lord; diligently studying how he may throw suspicion,—render a misrepresentation plausible,—make an unexplained circumstance appear a crime. Let him look up at the awful countenance of the Vindicator!

There are many men studying with all their might how they may oppose religion itself, God's own cause. Some of them devising arguments against its truth and reality—keenly intent on finding some defect of evidence—some contradiction,—some absurdity,—labouring, as if for the salvation of their souls, to throw some mist of dubiousness on what is the most palpable and bright. The "*counsel of the Lord*" is, that his truth shall shine forth resplendently over the whole earth, and that *they* shall be driven into outer darknesss.

Some are devising how to obstruct and baffle the practical measures for promoting religion,—and, for their reward, they see those expedients and exertions multiplying and extending in a wonderful manner. There may be even promoters of general knowledge, who are secretly anticipating, as a desirable consequence, that knowledge will ultimately explode religion—a mistaken calculation, it will be seen! That without which there cannot be religion, God will not allow to become the cause that there shall not be religion. He will not suffer the general mind to be awakened to think, for the very purpose of not thinking of Him.

But there may be devices in the heart, in contrariety to religion, of a nature less directly hostile—but tending to make void some essential vital principle of it;—schemes for obtaining the Divine favour, satisfying the divine justice,—obtaining final happiness,—on a different ground from that revealed as the only one—such as, the formalities of

religion, or a man's own good works. "*The counsel of the Lord shall stand,*" that there shall be no redemption but through the work of his Son.

Devices there are, also, for getting rid of the strictness of the laws of God, qualifying and softening them,—equivocating with conscience. But he will maintain the great standard inflexible and eternal; and woe to those who shall have presumed to substitute a different one.

And, finally, there are the many schemes entertained in the heart, of a nature not in opposition to God, if they be but formed in submission to his supreme disposal; the various projects for temporal good,—the plans of life and action. Many of these will be disappointed and fail, during the fulfilment of God's own providential plan for our passage through life. What need then, in entertaining such schemes, to remember the uncertainty of all sublunary things, and to resign all to His sovereign counsel,—that, when one device, and another, is frustrated, we may humbly and complacently repose in his determination as the best.

On a view of the whole matter how important is it, that all the designs of the heart should, in principle, be conformed to the spirit of his unalterable counsel;—that in all our projects we should be conscientiously and solicitously aiming at a general conformity to his will. *Then* we may rejoice in the "*devices*" that succeed,—and be assured that those which fail, do so because he has designed for us something better. We may even be assured, that schemes, formed in a sincere intention to serve and please him, will not, in being frustrated, lose their reward.

Last of all, let us remember that there is appointed a day when "*the secrets of all hearts will be revealed.*" How many devices which were formed and could not be carried into effect, will be exposed in illustration of the spirit of those who formed them; how many black designs that

never went further than their recess in the heart,—but also, many pious and excellent ones. And so, not only the actions, but the “*thoughts and intents of the heart,*” will be of mighty effect in the final sentence.

LECTURE LVIII.

CHRIST WALKING ON THE SEA.

MATTHEW xiv. 22—33. MARK vi. 45—56.

“ And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away,” &c.

WE might begin by observing, that there needs a special disposition, and a voluntary and earnest effort of the mind, to receive anything approaching to an adequate idea of such wonderful transactions in the history of our Lord. Persons who reflect on the state and movements of their own minds, sometimes recall a striking scene which has just been exhibited to them, in the sacred history, to think how they were affected by it at the time of reading it. And the wonder only *then* springs up,—a mingled wonder, partly at the thing itself, not till then duly admired,—and hardly a less wonder at themselves, that they should not have been more struck and amazed by what was presented to their attention. And they become conscious, (and reproach themselves for it,) that they did not give their full and fixed attention to the wonderful object. If they proceed to ask themselves, *why*,—*how*, this could be, they may find several causes; but the chief one is a criminal one—the want of a serious habit of mind,—and so, of the requisite sensibility and aptitude to take strong impressions of great things. A serious and religious habitude of mind is the indispensable adaptation for receiving the full impression.

But, besides this, there is required, as we said, an effort

to bring the mind to a close and intimate contemplation of the object or the scene,—an endeavour to look on it as near and as thoughtfully as possible,—to have imagined how it would have been to have actually seen and heard. It is grievous to reflect, what a difference is made by distance of time and place. When we feel assured that the thing was *so*, what does it, in reality, signify that it is not *now*, and *here*? When our souls can go out through all time and place, shall they, nevertheless, be so dependent on immediate impressions on the senses? The mind might surely say, “What are time, and place, and actual seeing, and hearing, to me, while I *can* realize within myself the important transaction, or spectacle, which the infallible testimony describes to me?”

It may, indeed, be of no material consequence whether we do this, with respect to many striking and wonderful things which are related and described to us. But, assuredly, it is of very great consequence when we come to such things as the amazing events related to us in the sacred history; and, above all, those recorded of our Lord, in his visit and sojourn upon this earth. At each wonderful event in that history, let the reader pause and ask, “What was this for, with respect to the people who beheld it? What was the feeling required in *them* when they witnessed it? What feeling was it, which it was contemptible, and even wicked, for them not to have, at the time?” He can tell; and he reproaches them,—perhaps is astonished at them, if they appear not to have felt such impressions. “Well, but then,” let him say, “how do these great events concern *me*? *What for*, does the Divine testimony bring them to me? To amuse me? or merely to fill up a little space in history? *What for*? They are to certify, to me, the Divine commission of Jesus Christ, —to display to me the power, the goodness, the glory of the Son of God,—to

show me what an important, what a magnificent, what an awful concern, was that of human salvation, and of mine; and *that* is a permanent concern, through time, and to eternity. But then, these grand events are as important *now*, as they were *then*; as important to *me*, as they were to the persons who lived *then*, and actually witnessed them. But then, again, with what manner of attention, and impression, should I now contemplate these wondrous transactions in the life, and at the death, of the Divine Redeemer."

Such reflections will bring reproach upon us, for that slightness of attention, and indifference of feeling, with which we are apt to read the wonderful events in the life of Christ; and will show, that we need be excited to an effort and exercise of mind, to realize to ourselves more distinctly, forcibly, impressively, those memorable events and transactions, when we read the account of them. We should endeavour, for the time, to constrain our utmost attention to the scene placed before us; strive to place ourselves, in thought, as if there; pointedly observe the circumstances; conceive how we might or ought to have felt, if we could have been actual witnesses; think how insensate it would have been,—what very stones we should have been if wonder had not seized us,—if instruction had not beamed into our spirits,—if love and admiration of the great Wonder-worker had not filled our minds. In such a serious effort, and not forgetting to implore the Divine influence, we should often find, that any one of the great transactions would stand displayed before us in a stronger and more instructive light, than in the too ordinary manner of their passing before us.

Let us, for a few moments, try to exemplify this in the instance of the short narration we began by reading. It is given with that unrivalled simplicity which pervades all the

evangelic history, and which was befitting the historians of Him who spake and acted in a manner quite distinct from that of any other that ever dwelt on earth. It is such a manner of relating, as leaves those who can impute contrivance, fiction, and imposture, no pretension to *honesty*, except at the cost of losing all pretension to *perception*.

Our Lord had just performed one mighty miracle, that of feeding five thousand persons with five loaves and two fishes,—a miracle in one view, of a more palpably direct, immediate, and decided character, than even the descent of the manna in the wilderness; that is to say, there was more plainly no room, if we may so express it, for the Divine agency to interpose the operation of any natural cause, as we are accustomed to call it. Not that, in the case of the manna, it is possible, in the smallest degree, to conceive of any natural cause that could intervene; but there was, at least, much more space of time for an operation on the material elements, and the effect was not wrought so directly under human observation. Here, in the case of our Lord's miracle, the fact was, plainly, under the immediate sight of a vast multitude of people, that a certain small quantity of bread and fish was, within one hour, an immensely greater quantity. This done, the multitudes were sent away.

Now, after such a transaction, how long, would it be thought, might the performer of such amazing works intermit, and, as it were, repose from, his mighty operations? Beholding him as a *man*, amidst this stupendous agency, we might have had a transient feeling as if he should subside, for a while, into quiescence,—take some time to enjoy, for a space, the glory and the triumph, and receive, in a dignified inactivity, the honours due from the people, as the performers of grand worldly exploits did. But no; we feel no surprise, to see him, a few hours afterwards, giving another display of his sublime power, in a quite different manner.

Reflect, here, what a tribute we involuntarily pay, (and, indeed, too often without consideration,) to his peculiar and glorious character. We take it as all in but right order, quite natural, and almost of course, that he should perform prodigies of superhuman power, almost as the ordinary course of his action. We never think of him as rising above himself in these mighty achievements, and then subsiding down to the level of mortality and humanity, till a mighty power should come on him again, to raise him to meet some great and extraordinary occasion. We never think of him as needing to make his grand performances rare,—to give them an interval to collect the due admiration. Whence is this, but that we have a settled estimate, or, at least, impression of his character, as entirely different from that of any other visitant on earth, and transcendently superior? But here comes a perversity of our minds,—namely, that we regard these astonishing works, in their crowded frequency, as so proper for him to do, and so easily and familiarly within his power, that we do not duly feel how marvellous they are. How ill-conditioned is the human spirit! If his mighty works had been but few, the sentiment would have been, that it had become such a being as the Messiah was predicted, and professed, to be, and come to the world on so awful and sublime a purpose, to have performed many more. But, on the contrary, they crowd upon us in rapid succession, and then,—they are only so appropriate to him and his grand office,—so natural, so much of course for *him* to perform, that we are the less sensible how wonderful they are in themselves! We want to see the energy of agonizing difficulty, and the pomp of display, to excite our admiration. But we are diverting from our immediate subject.

In the evening, the multitudes went away, and he constrained his disciples to enter into a ship to cross the Lake.

How totally unaware were all they of what was luminously before his mind, as to be transacted a few hours later!

One has often been struck with the idea of the *solitude* of our Lord's spirit. How many things incommunicable, of which there could be no mortal participator. What thoughts, what a profound consciousness, that could not be unfolded to any human intelligence. And how many things in his vision of the nearer and the remoter future, on which he chose to be silent. He was mysteriously and internally alone, whoever might be with him. In this instance he chose to be personally alone, and commanded the departure of his disciples.

It may be conceived that the dignity of our Lord's character required that sometimes all mortal society should retire from him; that they should be made to feel, that he belonged not always to them;—that he must sometimes have employments pre-eminently sacred, and withdrawn from all mortal witness or approach. He, therefore, sought the dark veil of deepest solitude, secluded in the loneliness of a desert mountain, and the shades of night. His employment there was prayer. In what strain we can never know, and should vainly conjecture. It is presumable that some of his prayers must have been of a nature infinitely peculiar,—totally different from all other prayer ever offered upon earth. With our belief in his Divine nature, we are met by an idea of something mysterious and enigmatical in the fact of his praying. It is almost inevitable to admit the thought, that some of his communications with the Almighty would be more expressly in that character than such of his devotional expressions as are recorded to have been uttered in the hearing of his disciples. At all events, the solemnities of intercourse with the Deity formed an admirable conjunction between what he had done and what he was about to do,—a dignified employment of the interval. And,

on all accounts, this worship was the sublimest and the purest that ever ascended from this earth to the Almighty. And it was a worship by One who had a world's eternal interests depending on him,—involved in what he did.

He could have remained all night in such occupation and such a desert. But another scene required his presence. His disciples might have wondered what his design could be, and when, and how, they should meet with him again. Though the Lake of Gennesaret (or “sea of Galilee,” or “sea of Tiberias”) was only five or six miles across, they had been, in their small vessel, labouring against adverse wind and water, many hours; for it was now several hours after midnight. That they had not Him with them in the tempest, would augment their distress and dismay. They probably had not yet attained the faith that he could, absent, preserve them in defiance of the storm and the billows. While they were thus employed and alarmed, their attention was suddenly seized by something else than the storm, and which even made them insensible to the tumult of the raging elements.

Now, how important a faculty to us is Imagination,—and yet at best how feeble and deficient! We want to place ourselves in the condition of seeing, suddenly, this strange spectacle, which “*they all saw.*” Think of being in this vessel, in the midst of this commotion, and, seeing a human figure, positively such, though with the indistinctness of the faint light of night or earliest dawn,—this figure walking over the surges, unaided by any solid support, perfectly at ease, with an entire command of its action!—a being that was on other terms with those elements than any frail mortal man—perfectly absolved from the laws under which all men are subjected to them,—think of such an apparition

The emotion of the disciples would be heightened by

perceiving that the portentous figure had them in view. They would apprehend that a power and an action so mysterious were directed, in some manner, on them. And their terror interpreted, that this form, and this action, came in awful alliance with the tempest. They probably imagined that they saw the very spirit of the storm—a power which actuated these elements to violence. In this object, therefore, they saw concentrated all that was alarming in the tempest,—insomuch that the tempest itself became secondary in their apprehension. Their irresistible impression was, that it was “*a spirit* ;” a clear proof that it was the established popular belief that spirits sometimes made themselves visible to mortal eyes ; (a persuasion which has prevailed over the whole world, and could not so have prevailed without a foundation in truth). It is almost always a dreaded phenomenon ; because we have no power over spirits, and they *may* have a fearful power over us.

The portentous figure, having approached the vessel, proceeded in a direction to go by and pass away. That indication might not give any relief to their fears. For their doom might but have been sealed by this fearful form having approached them, and looked upon them. He might be now passing away to leave them to their inevitable fate. Observe, in all this, what a decided impression there is on human minds, that the beings of another world are their superiors. Not only heroes and philosophers have trembled at the apprehension (and infidels and blasphemers too), but the holiest men, and the greatest prophets, have felt an awful emotion at the sense of their presence. And it is well there should be this impression of the superiority of spirits, though it may be often mingled with superstition. “*He went*” (Mark says) “*as if he would have passed by them.*” He would thus give the completed proof that he was inde-

pendent and master of the element; he needed not the ship,—was at home on the tempestuous deep.

He still, however, was very near, though not near enough for them to recognize his person;—and when the terror of the disciples had reached the last point of human endurance, he kindly spoke to them (in a voice preternaturally strong, but which they knew),—“*It is I, be not afraid.*”

Shall we take this for an emblem, and divert to the observation, that we mortals, that our souls—in this sinful state and world, are involved in far more formidable perils than those of a tempestuous sea,—and that we need just the same deliverer, in his loftier character of Redeemer? How necessary that men should become alarmed at their danger. And when they are so in genuine earnest, and cry out—He, the very same, says, “Be not afraid,—I am here.”

When he so spoke to the disciples, what delightful accents, to be heard through the roar of the storm! And when all the terror was seized just in its full strength, and converted into grateful adoration—what an energy of piety! Peter was so elated that he entreated to be called to meet his Lord on the waves. We may doubt whether, in a person of cooler temperament this request would not have been sinful. Christians should never seek extraordinary trials of their faith, when there is no duty to summon them. Their faith will *then* fail. And Peter incurred a practical rebuke of his hasty presumption on his faith; he was soon made to feel that it was far less than he had been confident it was. But this rebuke, both in fact and words, was accompanied by the mercy which stretched out a powerful hand to save him. It should have made him more cautious afterwards in his avowals, his too self-confident boastings, of what he would do and dare for his Master. “*O thou of little faith,*” he said. Observe, faith is proved to be very defective

whenever creatures are more dreaded than the Sovereign Lord of all creatures is trusted.

He entered into the ship, as it appears, while the tempest was still raging. And never was the intervention of a powerful friend and benefactor more welcome,—excepting (if we may once more turn the history into emblem), excepting when he comes to the soul under the terrors of guilt, or anticipating the terrors of death. But here, again, he changed their joy into an overwhelming amazement. They had just admitted the joyful hope that he would enable them to weather and escape the storm. But, quite different from this; the consequence of his coming into the vessel was, that instantly there was a perfect calm, and the next moment they were miraculously brought to land. For John says (vi. 21), “*Immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.*” They were overwhelmed again. This appeared to them, too much, almost, to be believed. There is more than intimated a strong censure of this feeling; and observe, by one of themselves, that is the relater,—“*For they considered not the miracle of the loaves, for their heart was hardened,*” (Mark vi. 52.) It is a charge of criminal dulness, and inaction of intellect. They would not have been so astonished, if they had properly reflected on the preceding miracle. Their having seen him exercise a power that could create, ought to have prepared them not to be amazed, to this almost incredulous degree, at the sight of a less demonstration of power.

But men are not creatures of thought and reflection. That which is connected with tumult and material magnificence, and where there is a mighty impression on the senses, strikes them as greater than a calmer phenomenon, in which thought, wisdom, may perceive still sublimer evidence of greatness and power.

However, it ended right; for they worshipped him as

"*truly the Son of God*," with a conviction, a solemnity, and an ardour, which we may well believe would have expected hardly less than the lightnings of Heaven to fall on any one who should have dared to deny it. He accepted, as in every such instance he did, this worship, by this solemn title. He went on land, was recognized by the people, ("*straightway they knew him*," that is, he was known,) and, in prosecution of his grand commission and career, proceeded to new labours, new instructions to illuminate the people, and new miracles to convince them.

LECTURE LIX.

ROBBERY OF GOD.

MALACHI iii. 8.

“Will a man rob God?”

THE ordinance of God has been that men should have certain things on certain conditions, belonging to them severally, as their own. But there has always been a mighty propensity to break through this great law. This has been the grand grievance and mischief, through all time and everywhere,—among all orders of men, each in their own way,—monarchs among the rest. To restrain it, by fear of punishment, has been a chief object of human law-making; and with very imperfect success, as we know too well. What would the condition of society be, if there were no such laws, and if, in no other way, punishment were to be apprehended? We do not at all wonder at this disposition and practice, with respect to property as among men. But here, in the text, is another kind of robbery, which does sound strangely; of which many may be guilty and little think of it.

“*Rob God!*”—it might be said,—“who could ever think of a thing so monstrous?—the very idea, the very words, are horrid. If that crime could be committed, what would it deserve? But how can it be? Yet it seems it can be,—for the next words are, “But ye *have* robbed *me*.” True enough, there is no ascending to heaven on such an enterprise. Not Satan himself, with all his dreadful army, (the black legions who once were there,) can do that. How

much less, if this were worth saying, any daring, miserable rebels of the mortal tribe! But, indeed, what is there in heaven that wicked men could wish to take? Why, they will not take the trouble to *ask* from heaven the very best things that are there! Nay, they will not even have them given,—they are offered, and offered in vain.

But, we are to be reminded that heaven is not the only domain of God's vast property. All here on earth belongs to him as well. And so, it is in the midst of things belonging to him that we are conversant, living and acting. Look and see what there is that does not belong to him; with no mark on it to tell, so that, "We may do what we will with this, without any regard to him." But, now, if all belongs to God, there comes in the liability to commit robbery against him. For, it may be, that there shall be no general habitual sense and acknowledgment of his sovereign claims; no feeling that all does so belong. This is the comprehensive spirit and principle of the wrong toward him, and will go into many special forms; this state of mind is a general refusal to acknowledge his law; it says to him, "Do not thou interfere with us here. Do not be telling us that this and that, anything, everything, belongs to thee. Be content to insist on thy rights,—thy dues,—somewhere else,—in heaven,—anywhere but here. Here we are, in a place that is our own;—and we *will* have it our own way;—let not a foreign hand be laid on the things." This is taking, as it were, the whole ground at once from God, and assuming a licence for every particular act and kind of robbery. Under the predominance of this spirit, it does not signify what one kind, specifically, he may tell us he has a right to; there is one answer for all cases. As if a man had obtained wrongful possession of a tract of land, and the person whose right it was should assert his right at one time to a particular building on it, at another to a fruit

tree, a well, &c.—the usurper would say, “I shall not contest about *this* particular and *that*—I refuse the *whole* claim.”

Coming to a more particular account of what may justly be called “*robbing God*,” we may say, that it is so, for anything to be suffered to have a stronger power over us than his will, so that, *that* shall have from us what his will obtains not; whether it be our own inclinations,—or the opinions of men, or the spirit, customs, example, of the world. These are strong powers,—and are sure to array themselves, in many instances, against the will of God. In a particular case, his will is declared;—requires so and so. “No;” says one of these evil powers, “not so, it shall be *thus*.” Which do we obey? “Not so;” again in another case, says another of them. These are plainly in a conspiracy that we shall “*rob*” him. The question is, do we agree with them,—yield to them? if we do, we take on ourselves the guilt of robbery;—the guilt of all the wrongs to God which these incite us to.

There should be conscientious care to form a right, honest, judgment, of what is due, of what belongs, to God. This estimate cannot be made out in the same exact manner as the appointments under the Jewish economy, the thing referred to in the text; nothing, in them, was left to deliberation. But in our case, there requires a serious, sincere exercise of thought;—such thinking (in point of grave and patient attention) as an intelligent upright worldly man would employ on some important affair to be adjusted between himself and another party. We are to consider, that we *are* nothing, and *have* nothing, but from him; whether so much, or so much, of any kind of service would really be too much to give to him,—(why too much?)—whether that measure, where perhaps our inclination would stop, would not be too little;—would it not, let conscience

honestly say. What says the Divine Word? what say the best examples? Thus the sincere mind may come to a judgment as to what it is that it would be robbing God to withhold from him.

It hardly needs be added, that this guilt is incurred by misapplying to other uses what is due to him. As if a Jew, of whom, on any occasion, a slain beast was required, as a burnt offering, had said (and *done* so), "Why not, instead, use it in the sustenance of my family;—or in hospitality to my friends,—or, give it to the poor and needy?"

But, a few plain particulars should be specified, of what we cannot withhold from God without this guilt. One, plainly at first sight, is, a very considerable proportion of *thought* concerning Him. What an amazing multitude of thoughts passing in and out of the mind! Thousands, perhaps, in a single day! It is a duty to see to them, what they are about; many of them come independently of will; yet the will has a large power and responsibility, for, we can think of what we choose. To a great extent, the thinking is necessitated by things to be done; but, after all, there remains a great deal just for voluntary choice. And here, how much is due to God? to him who has given the very power of thinking? Is a *little* thinking,—a slight occasional thought—enough? how should it, in all reason, be enough. Such thinking implies that the subject (in any case) is indifferent or insignificant; at least to us. Look at the small proportion of thought about God, and then ask, what is the greatest, strongest reason for thinking of anything? Look at it, and consider,—is this in any proportion to what God is? to the fact of his intimate constant presence? Is it in any due proportion to what he has said to us? in any proportion to what we depend on him for? to what we deserve from him? to what we shall receive from him? if quite the contrary, then we "*rob God.*"

Fear, of the deepest most solemn kind, is due to God. We have, naturally, an awe of power; to feel none of it, in the presence of the greatest conceivable earthly power, would be deemed (if, indeed, it were possible) rather as stupidity than courage. But, what is the right habit of feeling toward a Power to which all other power, all in the universe, is nothing?—a power awfully holy, at the same time, in nature, and in requirement. Will, then, a diminutive, frail, sinful, creature say (in effect;)—"Even so;—here, nevertheless, is an impregnable being that trembles not,—a fortified breast, invaded by no awful emotions,—cool, intrepid, undismayed, while almighty energy is in action all around it,—as a rock proudly standing up in a boundless ocean, regardless of the will, the sanctity, the commands, the threatenings, of the Infinite Power,—making no account of his long forbearance to destroy,—indifferent to all consequences, or rather, braving them?" "*Rob God!*" Why, that is the faintest description; it is to *defy*! How frightful to consider, that this, more than all this can express, or feebly shadow out, is the actual condition of innumerable minds all around us.

But there are other tributes due, corresponding to what we may call the more attractive and gracious attributes. "*Will a man*" refuse the gentler affections—*love, gratitude, humble reliance*? These affections are to be given,—to go out,—to something. And are they just to go out to a few inferior objects close around us, and stop there, quite absorbed? Do they there lose their warmth and force of emanation, so that they can go no further? Is it that the immense greatness of the Divine goodness, beneficence, kindness, mercy, chills them, repels them? Do they shrivel and wither under such a glorious sunshine? Is it, then, to the perfect excellence, the supreme goodness, the transcendent beauty, that the soul of man is to be indifferent and insensible? What, to love something, must it be of a low and little nature,

imperfect, uncertain, unsatisfactory, and even tainted with sin? or, must it be *sin*, its very self? Oh, it is a sad and most hateful condition of our nature!

As to the claim to *gratitude*,—let a man think what one single day's care of God over him is worth; and, to judge of it, let him imagine, if he can, the suspension, the withdrawalment, nay for one moment, and the consequences! There would be an instant rush into ruin—into nothing; no time for him to catch, in falling, at the aid of any inferior supporter; he would be precipitated down and perish. The Divine instruction sent to him, what is that worth? One expression, token, of mercy to him as a sinner, what is that worth? One gracious promise to him, as a feeble, endangered, mortal creature; what is that worth? But, then, the collective value of the whole of all these things! And will he refuse the due of gratitude?

There is, again, the sense and the habit that should be maintained in exercise, of *dependence* on God. A man (suppose) has to make a very long journey, through a region he has never traversed. He says, "What have I to reckon and depend upon? What are my means to start with? What will be my resting places when tired? What my shelter in case of storms? What guides shall I have when in intricacy or perplexity? What means of defence in perils? How I do wish I had some friendly, sagacious, courageous, person, to go with me!" Now, here is the condition of our journey through this world; and, on this dangerous enterprise, God claims to be acknowledged and sought to as our all-sufficient Guardian. What shall we say to him? for we must, that is practically, answer something. He is to be acknowledged or disowned, as the great Patron, Protector, and Guide. Shall we say,—“No; we can bestow our confidence more desirably. It is too much to be under the continual necessity of having recourse to

Him,—so that we are not to plan, calculate, pursue, or even hope, but in dependence on him, with invocation of him;—it will be so much interference. His offering himself as our aid and protector, is but, in another form, insisting on being acknowledged our Master. It will involve an interdict, a refusal, to us, a recourse to some other kinds of assistance. We shall not be allowed the privilege, taken by those foreigners planted in Samaria, who worshipped the Lord and sought to their own gods. Why may not our own understanding and ability be competent? And we may trust we shall not want for friends. We see people do obtain much good in the world without this constant reference and recourse to God; and why should not we? If there are to be difficulties, grievances, afflictions in life, why, we will hope for the best for encountering them. And, at last of all, no doubt we may do wisely, when everything else fails, to have recourse to the help and the mercy of God.”

Now all this is flagrantly to “*rob God.*”

But, we have to look further, at the full breadth of the declared law of God; the comprehensive sum of his commands; a grand scheme of the dictates of the Divine Will, placed peremptorily before us, and abiding there, as permanently as our view of the surface of the earth, or the starry sky. Literally so, as our Lord declares, “*Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law.*” But, unhappily, we are so apt to view this as only something *without* us; not feeling, emphatically, that it is something *within* us; that is, the rights, the claims of God in us, to that whole extent. This, if seriously reflected on, warns us to what an extent we are liable to “*rob God.*” For each and every precept tells of something we may refuse him, namely, the obedience; and a temptation stands close by each. Each one, making the demand for him of

something in us, seems also to say, "Wilt thou deny him?" Another, and another, still speaks in the same authoritative tone. But oh! then, what an amount of wrong we may commit, and be convicted of, against the greatest Being, and the best!

There are some that seem to "*rob God*" of nearly all. And with so determined a will, that there would seem but to need some more precepts (if that might be), for them to extend their injustice.

Others, not so bold in this wrong, think they must render *something*, but that a partial tribute, and a small one, may suffice. They wish to have something to allege to him, in proof that they do, in some way, acknowledge his rights. As in the case of some legal contracts, where there is to be some trifling, nominal, payment, merely as acknowledgment—a pepper-corn rent. And this partial acknowledgment so rendered will probably be, in those points of obedience, where there is the least of effort, of sacrifice, or of temptation to the contrary. And a kind of mock-humility may be saying in excuse—"Why, all we could or can do were most imperfect, and partial, and little, at the best, and surely the difference cannot be essentially important between *a little*, and *a little less*." At the same time, that same little that is rendered (and least inconvenient to render) will be highly magnified.

Many appear to think that if they do not rob men (if they render to them what is due), there needs not much care about what is specially and directly due to God. As if they should say, "This (to men) is care and trouble enough in all reason;" or, "nothing can really be given to Him,—or be called deprivation if withheld;—no injury can be inflicted. He wants nothing from any of his creatures. To his greatness and happiness, anything that men can render or withhold, would not be the fraction of an atom,—

would be infinitely less than a small cottager's tax to the revenue of a mighty monarch."

This would be simply to deny and explode the essential principle of the relation in which a dependent creature must *eternally* stand to its Creator, Preserver, Benefactor.

But at the same time let be remembered that it is not for his own sake, (in any sense intelligible to us) that God requires our homage, service and obedience. It is for our sake; because all the things he requires will be for our good, here or hereafter, not only because he will so, but by the nature of the case. To be conformed to the will of God,—to be delighted in performing services to him,—to be animated with the love of holiness, and all that is good, and hatred of sin,—this would be to be happy (in heaven itself) —therefore required.

And thus it will come to be found, that in *robbing God*, men iniquitously and fatally rob themselves. Deluded mortals! they imagine it is to be just so much gain to themselves! and in a certain, immediate, but disastrous sense, it is so. In refusing obedience to a Divine precept, they do gain whatever gratification there can be in the sin; as, no doubt, the forbidden fruit tasted deliciously to our first parents. The time, that might be employed in serious devout worship, they have for amusements, &c. The application of money—we mean of such portion of it as would rightfully belong to God, and is robbed from him, either by vain and vicious expenditure, or by parsimonious, insatiable accumulation. *Such* profit is there of robbing God; but how will the matter be found when it comes to the account? Take along this consideration, that which God has been robbed of by them, he cannot have for them, as a treasure in heaven, of the offerings and services sent up to him from faithful servants here below. It will have sunk into the

earth, or gone to the winds, or, been given to the Great Enemy.

After thus insisting on the preceptive economy we are under,—on law, duty, obedience, is it necessary to introduce a caution against *legality*? against the pharisaic notion of merit in rendering to God what is due to him? If it be, there is, instantly at hand, the observation, that self-righteousness is a flagrant robbery of God. In matters of duty and obedience, we have to approach him, so to speak, on the side of justice, (and it is, with so miserably imperfect an obedience at the best, that a claim for justification advanced upon it would be repelled by that justice, and blasted as with flames;—) then, for acceptance, solely on the side of mercy, as manifested to us in the mediation of Christ. This is announced to us in every possible form of emphatic declaration. Then, a legal, self-righteous, claim for acceptance and justification, how does it bear on the mercy of God? It plainly tells him he shall not have the glory of saving by pure mercy,—shall not receive our grateful acknowledgments of free, superabounding grace,—that we know better than to ascribe such an effusion of goodness to him. It tells our Lord and Saviour that the lofty language of the gospel concerning his great work, ought to be abated,—that he must be satisfied with a very limited gratitude, inasmuch as we could *nearly* do without him. Now, this would be the most fatal conjunction of the two kinds of robbery—of God, and of ourselves.

But then, again, there is the same wrong against God in an opposite form; that is, when men take advantage of grace and mercy to exempt themselves from the obligations of duty, as dictated by the Divine law. As if they should say, “If we are to pay such large tribute to the attribute of mercy, we will balance it, by withholding that to justice;—it is too much, equally to honour two attributes;—by the

one attribute being satisfied, the other shall be silenced ;—or, if it presume to speak to us of duty, we will reply by alleging free grace.” But, from what cause was the grand intervention of grace, in the appointment of the Mediator ? why ? But because there had been a fearful breach of the Divine law ; for remedy of which—that so awful a fact should not be permitted to pass, as if in defiance of God—a new and amazing kind of interposition was absolutely necessary. And shall this very mediation, appointed for this very reason, be perverted to the horrid purpose of abrogating the authority of that very law ?

But to come to an end. We mentioned, in very general terms, some things as due to God ; to specify particulars were endless ; but we will name *one* (as bearing on the object of our present meeting), that is, *the duty of promoting the cause of God in the world*. That cause being in the world, there is, in *His* estimate (in which he cannot be mistaken), some certain amount of what is due from men, in promotion of it—due, therefore, to Him. Now, it might be a formidable revelation, if He were to declare that amount, and then set it against what is rendered. And if each professed servant of God, and follower of Christ could be supposed to be asked,—“ Will you have your individual part of the statement set before you ? ” he must be a bold man who should, instantly, and free from all apprehension, say, “ Yes, I am sure of what it will testify.” For instance, a man who sees that religious good, in his neighbourhood, might be done by him, in various ways, or *one* way, *if* he had zeal, activity, liberality, &c. A man who sees worthy attempts—commenced trials to do good, struggling, almost sinking under difficulties which he could effectually aid. A man who, if he could be content with less of state, and show, and style, in his mode of life, might afford much to the good cause. A man who is economically and success-

fully saving, and thinks he may as well save God's share with the rest; or even does not recollect that any accounts are kept in heaven. We hardly need specify, a quite opulent man, continually augmenting his wealth; but, though a professed Christian, regarding the slenderest outgoings for the cause of God as quite enough. One has come in the way of knowing, here and there, divers such individuals,—members of Christian churches—punctual in attendance on ordinances,—(“fills up his place,”)—very regular in their conduct, free from the ordinary and external vices,—but, while perfectly well known to be vastly rich, not less notorious for niggardly parsimony in their contributions to the cause of God—plainly “*robbers of God.*” *Now, I cannot pretend to know much of the right formation and discipline of churches, but it does always appear to me, that there must be something very unsound in the constitution of a church that retains such a member.* They are expected, and justly so, to exercise discipline in various things very censurable, but not of the worse kind, (great imprudences, temporary lapses under sudden temptation or provocation, injurious actions of a minor degree, &c.) But here is a great flagrant IDOLATER in their communion, who might just as well go on his knees, and literally worship his gold and silver, if put in the form of an image; (his objection to have it put in that form would be that it would pay “*no intercost!*” yet he would affect to admire Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego!)—and yet, it would be thought a fanatical excess to rise up and assert that he is no fit member.

But however, we have no great number of “*passing rich*” men in our dissenting societies; and must mainly depend on persons of moderate (some of them very moderate) means. The claims come, indeed, very often,—the stronger needs to be the impression *whose* claims they are, and the assurance, that though men can give to God “*only of what*

is his own," yet he accepts it, less as the payment of a debt, than as a free tribute of love to him. For it is remarkable that every form of generous language is employed by him. There is, then, a certainty that what is given to his cause will be, on the whole account, no loss. What men in a pure spirit render to God, will come back to them here, or meet them hereafter, in a manner to testify that their Lord has not forgotten.

And, as the "*gifts OF God are without repentance*," so will the "*gifts TO God be without repentance*."

LECTURE LX.

THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS.

ZECHARIAH iv. 10.

“Who hath despised the day of small things?”

THE question supposes the actual thing inquired for, namely, that there are such persons. It is not one of the questions which imply the answer that *none* have done the thing described; as for example, the question, “*Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him?*” Isaiah xl. 13.

For, the contempt of small beginnings has been quite a common feeling. We have an instance in the case which the text stands against—the founding of the second temple, after the return of the Jews from Babylon. And any tract of History affords examples. Divers of the great powers, and influential systems, good or evil, that have had a mighty effect, have in their apparent insignificant origin, been despised. Sometimes an individual, entering on life in a mean condition, neglected, depressed, ill-treated, has risen to great power over the political or intellectual condition of mankind. Christianity itself, in even the person of its glorious Founder, was “*despised and rejected of men.*” The apostles and primitive Christians were regarded as the “*offscouring of all things.*” The contempt entertained for the slender beginnings of such grand movements, continued till they became great enough to be dreaded and hated; contempt was often affected still; there was a forced laugh through the dark disturbed looks of

detestation and apprehension. We may thus see the question of the text answered, both in reference to the small beginnings of things magnificently good, and of such as have been indifferent or bad.

But our object is to comment exclusively on the tendency in men to indulge contempt for *good* things in the littleness and weakness of their beginnings and early operations.

The case with our world is, that man, having lost his original goodness, was thenceforth to be under an economy of discipline for his correction and partial restoration; but that the operation for this was not to be sudden,—rapid—overwhelming—universal;—not one comprehensive stupendous miracle of transformation. No; the divine scheme was (the fact shows it) that the work so grand in the final result, should be, by various processes, commencing in different periods of time, and parts of the world—and commencing in an apparent littleness of agency, power and scope, so as to appear, in human judgment, incompetent to a great purpose,—struggling with difficulties,—slowly progressive,—gradually combining, as springs and rills find their way to combine in rivers, and rivers fall into confluence, in their magnificent progress to the ocean.

Why has the Sovereign Wisdom appointed it so? Why? Human wisdom is reduced to silence. The inquiring mind may look, with long intensity on the mystery, but there is no gleam or glimmer through the darkness. And none can tell how far it is through that darkness to the region of light. A consequence or two, however, of the case being so, may be noted. It is a higher discipline for the servants of God, as agents, in a good cause, as it brings their principle of obedience under a more plain, unequivocal proof; they render a more simple obedience, (more on the bare principle of obedience)—a

plain, direct submission to authority and command. It is a stronger trial and proof of their sincerity, faith, and patience, so that they rather act from believing than seeing. It tends to keep them under a direct, pressing, conviction that all the power is of God. "My feeble hand! my baffled will! No success but as He pleases!" They will have a stronger sense of the value of the good that is so hardly and slowly accomplished,—will verify and prize its worth by small portions. As a man, in a slow, laborious progress to wealth or high distinction, appreciates each added particle and step of advance,—abides a little while with each, dwells complacently on it. As an edifice, reared stone by stone, instead of as by Aladdin's lamp.

To return to the text. There is much of a disposition to undervalue, "*despise*," the small beginnings, and slow, early stages of a good work. It were well, if we could expose the error and injustice of this disposition.

And, for one thing, shall we say, it comes from not duly apprehending the preciousness of what is good, in any, even the smallest portion of it. Any essential good, in the highest sense, is a thing of inexpressible value; especially so in an evil world, where it is scattered among baser elements. It is a particle of heaven dropped on our soil,—a "*pearl of great price*." Let us not say, it is but so much, or so much; that is, so little. Look at its quality, its colour! Who would throw a small piece of gold away? It is a thing to delight ourselves with; is it not even the more so, because it is scarce? Here is what Satan has not been allowed to steal. Some things may have only a relative, this has an absolute, value. If "*despised*" in the small portion, it will not be rightly estimated in the large. For it were, then, not the quality, but only the quantity; whereas, the large is valuable because each part is so.

Again; in the indulgence of this disposition, it is left out

of sight, how much, in many cases, was requisite to be previously done, to bring the small beginning into existence at all; it did not start into existence of itself. Though "*small*," it may have been the result of a large combination. What providential conjunctures,—progress of society,—long and anxious thinking in minds touched by the finger of God,—attempts, trials, made and frustrated,—sometimes sufferings endured,—and contempt,—"*despising*" enough endured, sometimes, before a worthy design could be made a practical thing—be in an organized form for action. Now this should be reckoned into the value of the thing. It is the precious, compounded extract of all these materials. Sometimes one thing, and sometimes, another, could be specified, in default of which even a hopeful attempt could not have been made.

Another thing is, that we are apt to set far too high a price on our own efforts and services, as estimated against their results. The thing accomplished appears as yet but "*small*," but "To think what it has cost us! Far enough from '*small*,' truly, have been our labours, expenditures, sacrifices, self-denials, inconveniences, pleadings,—perhaps prayers." We have striven,—why such perverse and baffling opposition? We have reasoned,—why so few convinced, when the reasoning was the very sunshine of truth? When we *have* convinced,—why such indifference and inaction? We have contributed money,—why such parsimony in many who have more of it? We have preached,—how little the people are mended for it all! We have formed schools, or taught them,—does one in ten of the pupils become such as they ought all to be? We have circulated bibles by the million,—where are the large conspicuous evidences of the benefit? Where does the book turn the house to a temple? Our self-importance cannot endure that so much of our agency, *ours*, should be consumed for

so small a result. A tenth part of the pains should have done as much. It is not an equivalent; and it is a hard doom to work on such terms.

In such ways, a good cause, in its first small successes may be, in a sense, said to be "*despised*," even by those who do something to promote it. For, they undervalue it,—are mortified at it; it does not repay them,—elate them,—do them honour. But, by many others there is felt a real, unmodified contempt. They laugh (but with malice in the mirth) at the schemes, undertakings, and hopes, of zealous, good men. It is within the recollection of some of us, for example, what unlimited scorn was poured on the Serampore Mission, in all forms and changes of contemptuous language,—in publications, and senates, and camps. "The madness," it was said, "of men who could dream of converting Indian pagans, by means of bibles, preachers, schools, and paltry tracts!" And less or more of such scorn has assailed every new project for religion, in its origin and first stages.

Again; it was observed that we over-rate our own efforts in regarding the effects, the results, as so little in proportion to them; it may be added, that we over-measure our brief span of mortal existence. We want all that is to be done for the world, to be done in our time; that a vast process should make a visible, measurable movement, going along with our rapid succession of months and years. We consider not, that the Divine scheme is formed on the scope of immensity and eternity; that all the parts of it must proceed in equalised relation to one another; something in slow progress here may be waiting the advance of something elsewhere, to be in consentaneous operation. But we want to contract the Almighty's plan to our own limits of time, and to precipitate the movement, that we may see clearly to the end of it. Something like as if a man, com-

mencing the process of cultivation on the edge of an American wilderness, should be vexed that the vast extent of forest cannot be cleared in a year or two; or, a wish, that the lands and seas of the globe could be narrowed in order to a quicker traverse.

In all this, there is the impiety of not duly recognizing the supremacy of God. Being called on to act our little part in his grand scheme, we begin to say,—“ Let us understand it first, in its entire extent;—its proportions, harmonies,—relation between means and ends.” And what for? Why, plainly, that we may see whether we can make it *our* plan. We are not content to say, “ It is God’s plan, and that’s enough.” We want it to be such, that we can take it for ours, on its own reasonableness and wisdom, independently of the will of God; irreligiously saying, in effect,—“ We must know distinctly what we are about, while giving our service in this concern.” In all this, the grand essential of religion, *Faith*, is wanting;—faith in the unerring *wisdom* of the Divine scheme and determinations; a mighty conviction that infinite intelligence cannot be wrong in judgment;—faith in the *goodness* of God; the absolute certainty that infinite wisdom and power cannot be otherwise than good; it is in subordination to some transcendental good, that good is not accomplished faster here. Faith is wanting in the *promises* of God; that his servants shall, in the *succession* of their generations, see his cause advance from the small to the great, though this be not granted to any *one*, separately; that their little labours shall be, each in their turn, approved and recorded; and that they shall at last exult in the glorious consummation.

He shall bring the headstone thereof with shoutings,”
(Zech. iv. 7.)

With such Faith, let us look on “ *the day of small things*,” and remonstrate against the tendency to despise it; whether

it be in good men, from impatience, and a very censurable self-importance; or in worldly men, from irreligion. And to this purpose it would not be a quite foreign reference to look, a moment into the Natural World, as having an analogy emblematical of a higher order of things. There we see many instances of present actual littleness containing a powerful principle of enlargement: the seed of a plant,—the germ of a flower,—the acorn of the oak. Does the planter despise it?—the unclosed bud,—the slender shoot? Shall we say, look at a small particle of fire—how insignificant! But there is in it a mysterious principle of tremendous power. There is Infancy, that of man,—and his childhood; but does the parent “*despise*” this “*day of small things?*” Let us turn to that higher department (the religious and moral), which is denominated in a more peculiar sense, the kingdom of God on earth, the promotion of which is the cause of God. There the things that as yet are “*small*” are to be estimated not according to their present dimensions, but according to their principle, and according to what they are to become. We are to recognize in them a *Divine* principle; that God has put in them his will, his power, his Spirit. If they be of his originating, his appointment and approval,—they have in them an inextinguishable principle of life and power however inconsiderable they appear; they have in them, then, the *value* of that principle.

But it may be asked,—what things, as yet apparently small, come under this description? We answer; all things, judiciously and in good faith, attempted to promote the best cause, that is, to diminish the awful sum of human depravity and misery. For example,—efforts to diminish the dreadful amount of *ignorance*; that mankind should be raised out of the grossness of a mere sensual existence, to pass a mere animal life and die,—should have their souls

brought to exist for their own selves, and not merely for the forms of matter which they dwell in; should have light let in through these bodily inclosures;—that they should not remain wholly unapprised of a thousand things which concern them,—should be rendered capable of being treated, and treated with, as beings that know the meaning of things; and not meet the more enlightened just as if it were mere dull matter meeting mind;—so that they should not be as a cast-off mass of humanity, with which cultivated humanity feels as if it had nothing to do, and be content with that condition. Now the system of efforts and means of working this important business, with any thing at all like the due extent and activity, is of comparatively recent origin; so that, though that has been a considerable effect, it is still “*the day of small things*,” and there has been no lack of “*despisers*,” even up to the present time, as seen in contemporary publications.

This topic, of course, includes the progress of *Education*. The wide opprobrious neglect of it, through generation after generation, neglect by State, and Church, by the wealthy of the nation, and magistrates and parents,—had left it in so wretched a condition, that to many it seemed almost hopeless: while others, who did not care for its condition, ridiculed those who were not willing to let it remain so,—wished them success of their drawing water with a sieve. Much has been done, certainly; more, we hope, will be ere long. But, considering how very little it is that millions receive, and that hundreds of thousands receive none, we must confess that it is “*the day of small things*.”

We must name, *the progress of genuine Christianity*, in even a nation nominally Christian; its present degree of prevalence, in real belief, feeling, and practice. We should not, and would not, be uncharitable; but suppose, such a thing might be, as that, the Infallible Discerner, who will,,

at the last day, make the manifestation, were to distinguish, by some visible sign, who are genuine Christians (that is, really in earnest about religion, sincerely devoted to God and Christ, intent on salvation,) would not such a manifestation of the respective proportions be an overwhelming spectacle to a pious and benevolent mind? But who, unless instigated by Satan, would "*despise*" *this* measure of progress and prevalence? No; rather we should bless God for so many, and for every one; and, while under an awful impression of the mystery of the restricted prevalence of Christianity, yet in a confident assurance of a glorious outpouring to come in God's due time.

If we look widely abroad, beyond our immediate sphere, over the vast portions of the human race under the domination of all manner of imposture and delusion, it is indeed "*the day of small things*" for Christianity. But then, what is it, that, on this account, shall be despised? Is it Christianity itself, which God has sent on earth? Or, is it God, who has sent it? Or, our Saviour, who brought it? or, the benevolent interest that good men take? or, missionaries who go, and indefatigably labour? or, the translations of the Bible into various languages? or, the converts made, however comparatively small in number? or, the alterative process, short, as yet, of decided conversion, but partially breaking up the inveterate fortified security of superstition? No; the good is essentially valuable, as we were saying before;—valuable for what it is; and also for what it portends. For itself, considered alone; the testimony to this is in heaven, for "*angels rejoice over one sinner that repenteth*;"—and on earth, for what devoted, apostolic man would not justly rejoice (and all good men with him) over one true convert from paganism? And at home, does any faithful minister "*despise*" even the first unequivocal manifestation of a happy change in one individual?

But we say, that commencing operations and movements in the cause of God, have a warning against men's contempt of their smallness at first, in virtue of being destined to advance to something greater. We may be confident that when God makes, or causes, a beginning of a good work, it is intended for progress and expansion. It is most certainly, not a single, solitary thing, at once a beginning and an ending; a mere unmeaning phenomenon; a transitory meteor. It is in a connection and train to something which is to follow. And what should *that* be, but more good, and still more, interminably? For if it be good in the "*small*," better still in the large; therefore worthy of God. What else should God design it for, when it is plainly adapted to become an immense good? Would he just show what it might become, and then extinguish it? make the tree of life spring up, to cut it down? Not, surely, just to prove that he is able to maintain its existence, even in perpetual littleness, in defiance of an evil world that that would destroy it? Not, for example, to show that he can preserve a little spot of Christianity, one small Christian church, in the edge of the interior of a vast pagan realm, in spite of attempts against it? It must be for progress. And, in fact, we see that the good things sent to make their way on earth have been progressive and enlarging—civilization,—knowledge,—rational science, useful arts,—Christianity itself, and the indispensable means for promoting it. So that while our "*day*" is that of "*small things*," in comparison to what we desire, and hope, and pray for, it has considerably a character of magnitude, as compared with that of our remote, (and even not very remote,) forefathers. And we may, soberly, think we perceive some signs of accelerated progress;—some dawn of a more bright and powerful dispensation. We are not now, therefore, to lose our faith or earnestness in praying, "*thy kingdom come.*"

At the same time (to revert to our word "*soberly*") we should take care not to talk and boast extravagantly of what is done,—of what we do. There has been indiscretion in this matter. A soldier is not to blazon some minor successful actions, and inroads on the enemy, as if they were half the war and the conquest. We may well rejoice at the "*little cloud like a man's hand*," and say, "There is a sound of rain, and even some drops," without saying, "What a prodigious shower is falling!"

But now, to remonstrate and warn against "*despising*." To a decidedly irreligious contemner, we might say, "Beware what you do; for, "*if the thing be of God*," you are daring *Him* by your contempt. If there be something of his spirit and power contained and acting in things, it is not safe to make free with them in the way of scorn, however inconsiderable in magnitude they may seem. If we might suppose such a thing as that, in the early stage of the transactions in Egypt, a bold pagan had seized the rod of Moses, and flung it on the ground in contempt,—would it not have turned to a serpent once more? "*Who hath despised?*" It may *one day* (not "*a day of small things*" THAT,) be a question, not of rebuke, but of judgment. On that day, will not be forgotten a contempt of the introductory littleness (say, rather, undisclosed dignity) of what God had determined to advance to greatness and glory. "*Behold, ye despisers,—and wonder,—and perish!*"

There is, also, the admonition to those who are too apt to fall into something like what the text describes,—not from hostility to religion and general improvement, but from want of faith,—from indolence, cowardice, or mere worldly calculation,—reckoning things without reckoning on God. To undervalue is in a certain sense to "*despise*." They are cold and unbelieving, just the opposite extreme to fanatical and visionary. As the speculations, and projects, and

movements, and hopes, for making the world better and happier, come under their view, they say, at each turn, "That will not do,—there are no adequate means,—obstacles are insuperable;—there will be much labour for very small result;—think how foolish it would look in the event of failure;—we have enough to do to mind our own interests;—the time is not come yet; will it not be more *pious*, as well as more prudent, to wait for signs?—a good and great object, certainly, if attainable, but these small means, and agencies, and successes, what do they amount to for the purpose?" We may answer, "This is, at any rate, the way to *keep* them small, as far as *you* are concerned; and they will be kept so (that is, in their amount of human agency,) unless there be better men than you. And would you wish that there should be no better men? That thus a good work should remain small and stationary, or even cease, by the refusal of all to co-operate in it, that so they might turn their own fault to their own excuse or justification? They kept the good thing small, and then alleged that very smallness! Think! if this spirit had always prevailed in the slender beginning of worthy enterprises,—when a band of patriots were conspiring to free their country, as once in Switzerland,—the Reformation (to name that once again);—or in the instance, where a few good men joined and prayed together, collected a few pounds, and Dr. Carey preached to them, to "*attempt great things, and expect great things.*"

In remonstrating against the temper in question, shall there not be an admonition to examine whether pride, or sluggishness, or covetousness, have not something to do with it? In some cases it partly proceeds from the less blameable cause of a gloomy, apprehensive, disconsolate constitution of mind,—looking on the dark side,—dismayed by difficulties,—prone to fear the most and hope the least,

dwelling on remembered and recorded failures more than successes.

But there may be the interference of *pride*. A man shall have such a notion of himself, and of a good cause, even the cause of God in some humble form or department of it, as to deem it unbecoming his dignity to connect or concern himself with it. It is not of an order, or in a state, to reflect any honour on a man of his high sentiments, refined habits, or consideration in society. To take any part in it, might lower his level,—bring him into contact with an humbler class of human beings and Christians. Is it favoured and promoted by persons of account in the world? “*Have any of the Pharisees or the rulers believed?*” Every one has observed, when any specific scheme, religious or philanthropic, is bringing into shape and operation, what anxious eagerness there is to obtain for it the countenance and patronage of persons of rank and wealth;—this is an appeal to pride;—it is known that *then* it will not appear “*a small thing*,”—will not be liable to be “*despised*.”

With some men, a good work or design (acknowledged to be such,) is of “*small*” account, when it has not the quality for rousing their sluggish temperament,—no brilliant points—no glare—no explosive sound,—proceeding in a quiet, steady tenor of operation, instead of bold impulses, and striking adventure,—with nothing to excite gaze and wonder.

Covetousness is to be marked, emphatically, as one of the most decided practical “*despisings*.” Most truly does a man treat the good things as contemptibly small, when he deems them not worth his money, that is, money which he could afford. The extension of the preaching of the gospel is not worth his money,—nor the building of places of worship,—the better education,—expedients for reform-

ing the wicked,—enterprises for converting the heathen,—in short, the whole cause of Christ. He sees such things labouring with deficient means ; some of them, yet much in their minority of force and enlargement, appealing to him ; but no ; they are not worth his money, by his sole standard of value ; for him the noblest cause might remain diminutive and powerless to the end of time.

It may be here suggested, to imagine the feelings towards the close of life, of men who remember having despised a good work in the time of comparative feebleness, but have lived to see it struggle through its difficulties, and now advancing into strength and expansion. In minds incorrigibly bad, there is intense malignity, (though perhaps no longer openly proclaimed) ;—they regard the thing almost as if it were a personal offence and insult, like what has been reported of the apostate Julian.

But we would rather refer to such as were not positively enemies, whose “*despising*,” in a mitigated sense of the word, (that is depreciation,—standing aloof from a good cause,) was from little faith, self-sparing, false prudence, worldly calculation. They have to remember their cold, unfriendly looks at the concern and its advocates,—their perverse ingenuity in finding or making objections,—their predictions of failure,—their assumption of sounder judgment in making them,—how their favour was withheld, when worldly or irreligious men derided,—how their assistance was refused, when there was a pressing need of means. They have lived to see that the good cause could do without them, and that there were more generous, liberal, magnanimous spirits to be found in the community. They have lived to see the discountenanced undertaking advancing in a hopeful progress. But, no thanks to *them*, that a new force has been brought into the field for conflict with error and iniquity,—that some “*dark places of the earth*” are

partially enlightened,—that there has been a little extension to the kingdom of Christ—that souls have been converted;—that misery has been alleviated. A disconsolate feeling arises on such a review,—“I might have been ‘*rejoicing with them that rejoice.*’” There is mortification at the least, but a much better sentiment in a mind *now* rightly affected—regret.

Well; at all events the good cause of God, of Christ, of human improvement, is certain, is destined, to advance and triumph. This is amply assured to us in every form of declaration and imagery in our inspired volume. Revelation, after looking back, over a long, wide, dark scene, has a delightful aspect toward a still wider bright one. And who would not prefer the order of having the fairer part of the world’s long, eventful day to come, the latter? And, on the ground of Reason itself, we may be perfectly confident that, under the dominion of Infinite Power and Goodness, what is good has on it the impress, and decree, and certainty, of an ever augmenting prevalence—partly in this world, interminably hereafter. What is approved by Him—honours Him,—resembles Him, must be made successful, triumphant, and predominant, in His empire. He will not forever suffer the enemy’s camp on his grand field. The awful mystery why this triumphant ascendancy is so slowly achieved,—so long delayed in this world, will, it is reasonable to believe, be one of the subjects for illumination in a higher state of existence, where enlarging faculties will have endless duration for their exercise. It may *then* be seen, that the whole course of this world, from the beginning to the end, was “*a day of small things,*” as compared with the sequel,—only as a brief introduction to an immense and endless economy.

Meanwhile, let us devote ourselves to the cause which is to enlarge its powers and victories through all the ages

of time, to go magnificently into eternity. Let us be faithful to that kingdom which has already beheld the decay and fall of so many proud and mighty empires—the Assyrian—Persian—Roman,—we may almost add the Ottoman ; —*it* survives them all, treads on their ashes and ruins, and will, in its onward progress to universal dominion, realize the prophetic emblem of “*the stone cut out without hands,*” demolishing all hostile powers, and becoming as “*a great mountain filling the whole earth.*”

NOTE.—In the former editions, the introduction to this lecture and a few sentences referring to the Serampore Mission, were taken from the discourse that follows, on the same text, which is now printed for the first time. In the present edition the lecture and the discourse are given with scrupulous exactness as they appear in the original manuscript.—ED.

LECTURE LXI.

ON CONTEMPT FOR SMALL BEGINNINGS.

[A DISCOURSE PREACHED ON BEHALF OF THE SERAMPORE MISSION.]

ZECHARIAH iv. 10.

“Who hath despised the day of small things?”

THE question does not imply that such a thing may not happen. For contempt for small beginnings is one of the most ordinary displays of the human disposition, in all departments of affairs, but especially in things connected with sacred interests. We need not doubt that this was the case when Noah began building his ark. When the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilding, after the captivity, the enemies said, “*If but a fox go up, he shall break down their stone wall.*” It is related that when the commencement was made of laying the foundation of what was to be Rome, one of the persons present expressed his contempt by leaping over the humble construction. Individuals appointed to be of the greatest importance in the world, have often experienced contempt in the beginning of their career. When David, a “stripling,” came from the sheep-fold to the camp, how was he received by his martial brethren? And history does not want for instances of some man who eventually had a great influence on the condition of the world, experiencing contempt in his rise, in his youth, in his first aspirings, projectings, and attempts; but in process of time attaining the ascendant over millions, —a benefactor or a terror to nations. And then there was

our Lord himself, "*the bright and morning star*" of the moral world, contemned as a vain meteor when he rose! We cite him as an instance, though in one view there was nothing "*small*" in the beginning of his glorious era, since it began with a manifestation of *Divine* wisdom, power, and goodness. But regarding his ministry as the commencement of a cause,—of an actual acknowledged dominion on the earth, and as compared with the extending and ultimate prevalence of that cause, we might account it "*small*." And think how HE was received by the men of his time and nation! "*He was despised and they esteemed him not!*" —"*despised and rejected of men!*" In spite of the lustre of his heavenly wisdom, the charm of his benignity, the very splendour of his miracles, they cast on him scorn and ignominy. They talked contemptuously of the meanness of his human descent,—of the contrast fancied between him and Moses,—of his associating with people of the lowest quality. No fear was felt of expressing scorn of *Him*, both in words and actions. The utmost contempt that was compatible with hatred was poured on Him from every side. They would have disdained even a dream that he was beginning a kingdom which was to spread over the world—was putting in action a *cause* which should triumph at length over the Powers of Darkness, and all the hostility of men. Alas! how much men have been mistaken as to the proper objects of their contempt! and what a vain presumption in their calculations! Before men indulged their contempt, they should always have had good evidence, that there was no quality of Heaven, no principle of divinity, in what they despised. For they might be quite sure that if there were, the despised object was destined to rise up to throw shame and contempt on *them*. But the fact has been, that the vain world has always been peculiarly disposed to an unhesitating contempt of the small

beginnings of *Divine* operations—to attribute meanness to what had a relation to infinite greatness! The Christian cause itself, in its early stage (after its Lord had left the world) was an object of extreme scorn. Every ignominious epithet was connected with the name of a Christian. It has often been remarked in what terms of mingled contempt and abhorrence certain of the great Roman writers have slightly alluded to Christianity. And in subsequent periods, most or all of the important reforms relative to the interests of truth and religion, have made their first advances under derision and reproach, combined with animosity and hatred. So fared the great "*Reformation*" itself. The denominations of "*filthy dreamers, ravers, scum of the earth, reptiles, profane beasts, madmen,*" plentifully accompanied the more savage denunciations which consigned the reformers to prisons, inquisitions, and fires. They cursed, but often they cursed in a sneer.

Thus "*the day of small things*" has always had its crowd of despisers. No wonder, then, if our missionary undertakings have encountered the same, in their small origin, and in a measure hitherto. That mission, especially, on behalf of which we are, at present, wishing to plead, has received quite a superabundance of this sort of tribute, from levity, infidelity, and worldly policy. In this particular, it has really stood pre-eminent above all others. In its earliest stages, indeed, it was very little heard of, except among religious people, and perhaps not much among large portions even of them. When it did, incidentally, come into notice, in some gay and worldly company, where *one* happened to have heard or read more than the rest about what the fanatics of the time were doing, it was regarded as another characteristic sample of their folly—as a good subject for a passing jest, and was soon dismissed from attention. If, at the next time, it happened to be heard

that the local government for the time being, in the East, had exercised their power in the way of restraint and repression,—that was well done—it was highly proper to “abate such a mischievous nuisance.” Nevertheless, it went on; and at length was grown considerable enough to be taken into account in the questions of state policy, regarding the government of India, about fifteen years since. And then this missionary concern was brought before the whole nation. Many of us here can well remember in what manner it was received by the worldly and irreligious. There was, it is true, largely manifested among them a deeper sentiment than contempt. But still, the language of scorn was in the utmost activity. All terms of contumely—all figures and parallels to fix a character of abasement, folly, and lunacy;—with an admixture of the light, genuine notes of ridicule. It might have been supposed that fanatical frenzy must have assumed a wilder, more extravagant shape, in India, than all its own whimsical and monstrous superstitions had ever exhibited, in disgrace of human reason. We gratefully acknowledge the Divine interposition in frustrating then, and we trust finally, the hostile and malignant purpose conspicuous and avowed amidst that scorn.

We now hope the enemies and scoffers will never be able to do anything worse than the indulgence and expression of their evil dispositions. And these they will express chiefly in the form of *contempt*, and this *is* the feeling which thousands of them would avow, on any reference to the subject. The notion of converting a vast, an incalculable, population from the *religion* (so they will have it called) of their ancestors, established and confirmed through the succession of a hundred generations; and of a constitution peculiarly tenacious, invincible, and unchangeable! “*A thing impossible, in whole or in part,*” they affirm and reite-

rate, "by *any* means," "but the means talked and dreamed of, for the purpose, what are they? A few fanatical missionaries, and of insignificant talents, endured, just because they are despised.—Translations of a book which few will ever read, and which many would deem it a forfeiture of their sanctity even to look into.—Attempts by means of schools, to inveigle children into a dissension with their parents. And the means for keeping this petty machinery in action to be chiefly supplied by contributions from the most fanatical portions of the religionists in England. Well, *let* them (since the hand of power will not interfere to suppress the thing at once), let them go on with their meeting, and declaiming, and praying, and contributing, till they are tired;—let them fret their madness away, and become sober by despair."

Now we must also let *them* go on despising our "*day of small things.*" Nor must we deny that that is its true character, considered in some views. For example,—if we take the amount of all our present human means, and set it in comparison against the whole comprehensive object;—if we take account of the measure of forces (property, talent, effort, and energy), applied to this purpose of converting heathens, and set that in comparison against the measure applied to other projects and operations;—nay, even, if we make a comparison between the measure of exertion applied, and the proportion of actual success hitherto, that is, the direct success in obtaining converts, we must not scruple to acknowledge, even to the enemies and despisers of the cause, that it *is*, yet, comparatively, in its "*day of small things.*" But, at the same time, it would be easy to find something to say, even to *them*. For example,—“You do not think and feel in the same way about *other* things in their small beginnings. For instance;—the progressive powers and ultimate effects of an art or science (as chemis-

try, &c.); you will talk enthusiastically, how we shall go on to subdue Nature—make mere matter to act as if it had a soul—almost work miracles; or of an infant colony in some wide desert land. Some of you do not think in this way of projects for the political reform of states.

“But further, in other departments you are prompt to admire a high spirit of enterprise—the forming of a large, ambitious scheme, under circumstances in the utmost degree apparently unfavourable to its success; the beginning with but slender means, and resolutely prosecuting, though with little advancement for a while, and through the greatest difficulties; this you call noble-spirited,—heroic,—*worthy*, at least, of final success.”

“You extol some deliverer of his country from oppressors, invaders, and usurpers, who began his enterprise from some cave in the woods and mountains, with the feeblest means, under the worst omens. ‘Magnanimous spirit!’ you exclaim ‘that was not to be deterred!’—Nay, we should not wonder to hear some one or other of you admiring and lauding *Mahomed* himself for *his* bold project, and pertinacious inflexible perseverance! What then? it is only when the project is directed to the *best*, the immortal interests of mankind, and to the advancement of the kingdom and glory of God and the Redeemer,—that you can look with *contempt* on the commencement with slender powers and very slow success. This is your consistency, your equity, your liberal sense! The *piety* of the scheme spoils. The matter is, that you *hate* the OBJECT; and the case being so, it is for you to see to the consequences! You have need (all consideration about missionary schemes out of the question) of a much graver kind of sentiments than any that can comport with so vain and self-complacent a feeling as scorn.”

But think what a spectacle we have here! Men of intel-

ligence, in a Christian country too, who can be highly self-complacent in indulging contempt even for the very *principle* of a design to extend Divine revelation, and the religion of Christ, among the pagan multitude! Men delighted in the confidence that any such design must fail; deeply gratified in hearing how comparatively *few* genuine converts have yet been gained—and in repeating the assertions of those who affirm there are *none*!

Let us turn to a different view. The sincere friends of religion, and well-wishers to this undertaking, for extending it to the heathen nations, are not always free from a certain sense of discouragement and mortification, at seeing what “*a day of small things*” it is. They cannot conceal from themselves that it is so. They hear the missionary cause displayed in animated and eloquent discourses, and are delighted to have their thoughts and feelings, for a time, expanded and elated to magnificence and sublimity. But then, there is apt to follow a relapse and a depression of spirit, when they return to the cool, plain consideration of the present state of the facts.

In our own case;—a Christian of sanguine temper at the outset of our mission to the East, full thirty years since, if, in prospect, assured of such great and unremitting exertions, *would*, probably, have been very confident that, by this time, a greater number of conversions would be accomplished; taking into account the astonishing labours of the elder missionaries,—the number that have been sent to co-operate,—the number of places in which they have preached, and exercised every capacity of their office, and that in simplicity of purpose,—besides the amount of pecuniary cost. It may be, that at some moments the question may obtrude itself on the most zealous—“*Have we an adequate result?*” Might not the same very large amount of exertions have accomplished, probably, a great *direct* effect

among the heathens at home? If this has really been a well-judged direction of so much exertion,—is it not strange and somewhat discouraging, that the Sovereign Lord of Religion and the World should not have rendered so much exertion more eminently successful? Does the efficacy of the work, thus far in its progress, afford any appearances like signs of a great day of Divine Power approaching, and not far off?

We think it is better not to evade such intruding reflections of unwelcome aspect,—not to put them out of sight by splendid images; but to let them come plainly in view, and endeavour to counteract the discouragement they would seem to bring. And surely there are effectual considerations for this purpose, ready to offer themselves. Indeed at the very instant that any true and devoted friend to Christ and his cause feels the most sensibly the depressing effect of beholding so limited a success, we should be quite sure, nevertheless, of his honest reply to this question,—“*Do you then wish, can you wish, that this large measure of zealous and costly exertion had not been so directed, when you look at what has been performed in the Eastern World? (of course not wishing that so much of zeal and enterprise for Christianity had itself not existed.) Could you wish it had all been employed another way, and that the work in India were yet to begin?*” We may be confident, I presume, on what the answer would be. But then you will deliberately approve that the work should go on. And with the added force of this consideration too, that even *were* it doubted whether the scheme was not prematurely entered on, yet, so much having been effected, there ought now to be a zealous persevering to realize the utmost possible advantage of what has been done.

While we confess, that comparatively, this enterprise is in its “*day of small things*,” yet it bears on it some remark-

able signs of greatness. For example ; it is of a bold, capacious, we may say, ambitious character. It is connected with large and far reaching contemplations. Especially, it is connected with a new and higher order of thought and interest concerning the kingdom of the Messiah, and his glory. It is signally different from mere worldly designs, and even some very benevolent ones, in its involving so little of *selfish* feeling. It is connected with an extraordinary measure of the *exercise*, and we trust, the *spirit*, of Prayer. Reflect ! what has ascended to Heaven, that would not but for these missionary designs. And this is one of the very noblest characteristics of any design, and also one of the most auspicious omens. This spirit of prayer so largely sent down on the Christian Church, with a direct relation to efforts for the conversion of heathens, can it be accounted less than that sacred fire which (in several memorable instances) was sent down on the Altar, in token that the offering was accepted ?

And here think of the despisers ! They stand deriding an object concerning which an incalculable multitude of prayers, combined in one spirit and import, have ascended, and are ascending, to Heaven ! They think that all this adoring supplication might just as well be addressed to images of wood and clay. In their view all this but fixes a strong mark of folly on the object. Yes ! its having thus its very life and existence in being kept in immediate communication with the Almighty ! But in *our* view this is the proof of its dignity, and a presage of its success.

We are presuming on success. Now here consider, that the smallness of the beginning, of a work aiming at greatness, will bear a very different estimate under two different circumstances ;—namely, that the progressive and ultimate success is altogether uncertain, or that it is certain. In the latter case, the small introduction is no

longer to be estimated in the exclusive view of what it is in itself; the little commencement justly assumes a character from the greatness of the anticipated sequel. The beginning of every great work has, in itself, a quality of greatness in the view of those who foresee its ultimate greatness. Now we, as Christians, feel certain of success, speaking of the Christian cause generally, that is, that the religion of Christ will prevail through all the world. And then, next, we may be perfectly assured that these missionary undertakings are parts and commencements of the grand operations by which our Sovereign Lord will accomplish that glorious work. And therefore while we look at the "*small things*," we behold them magnified by the anticipation. And this gives ten-fold force to every consideration that can be alleged for the purpose of consoling and animating the Christian spirit, while beholding with regret, the smallness of the progress in the early stage. Under the advantage of this firm predominant assurance many considerations will be of avail for sustaining patience and zeal. We might just briefly notice one or two of the most obvious.

Let it be considered, that very much of what has been done in the first stages, is to be regarded as a preparation of the means, the instruments, the engines, the processes. It is especially so in the case of the particular mission for which we are pleading. It is a mission to a people of many languages, and a very considerable proportion in such a state with respect to literature, that it is above all things indispensable to bring religious truth before them in a *written* shape. And we need not say what a very large share of the exertions and cost has gone to this purpose—the indefatigable study of languages—learned natives and all manner of aids drawn together to assist,—translations of the Bible,—preparation of all kinds of works to facilitate

the attainments of following missionaries—a vast and expensive establishment for all this—with subsidiary institutions as schools, &c.,—the formation, in short, of a comprehensive system of intellectual machinery,—which commands the respect of all classes. All this was necessary to be done,—was the best possible method to be adopted—*if* the Christian illumination of India was to be attempted at all. But much of all this was preparatory work,—the creation of means. Heathens could not be converted by the progress of the translation and printing of the Bible; but there must be that laborious process,—and gone over again in various languages, before heathens could come into immediate communication with the awful authorities of religious truth.

Time will be required; and we must not think of limiting the Divine Being to the measure of the time, for this great system of expedients to extend widely into actual operation. But it will so extend,—ever, and the faster, and the further. And unless God has, as to that region of the world reversed his plan of sending his Spirit to accompany his own word, its extension will be a progress of victory and conversion. And consider,—when the means shall, on the wide field, be accomplishing their happy effect, how large a value, in the account of that effect, will be assignable to the *preparatory* operations. The future labourers, in periods of brighter success may say, “This success belongs, in some large measure, to that earlier period when the actual success was comparatively small.” So that the indefatigable missionary of the present “*day of small things*” is virtually the instrument of conversion to tens of thousands unborn at the time of his closing his labours by death. He is, by rightful anticipation, a sharer of the greatest future successes. Thus, we must not wrong the “*day of small things*” by estimating

it exclusively of its consequences, those consequences of which it is preparing the means.

Again, consider,—if we must fully admit, from the nature of the case, and independently of the actual experiment, that the difficulties to be encountered by this particular mission must be peculiarly great, we must be consistent, and not be surprised to find it so. What means “*difficulty*,” but that which makes the accomplishment of a purpose hard and slow? And the difficulties cannot well be overstated, except in the representations of those opponents who assert they are insuperable. The work is harder in some respects than among a tribe of simple savages. There is a most complicated, deadly, and tenacious superstition,—a dreadful perversion of intellect. There is a speculation in the superstition, powerfully operating in favour and justification of practical wickedness. And there is ancient authority,—inveterate custom,—and the iron despotism of *castes* and formidable interdicts. Now, when aware that all this *is* so, the friends and agents of the Mission are not to be surprised, and to complain, that its operation does not go rapidly on just as if this were *not*. If they are dissatisfied in prosecuting the cause on such terms, the question would come to be, whether they ought not rather to have undertaken some easier enterprise. But has it been in any age, the glory of the zealous promoters of the kingdom of our Lord, to decline the more difficult enterprises? And then, if in the present instance, the undertaking had been, for this reason, declined,—we may ask *when*, and *under what circumstances*, it should have been entered upon? What! not till those Pagans should, in a great degree, have grown out of their superstitions, and enlightened and reformed themselves!

Still, however, some friend of the cause may not be con-

tent,—may allege—“The operations have now gone much beyond the merely preparatory measures, and why has not the Divine Spirit given greater efficacy to the actual exhibition of the Gospel to so many heathen minds?” The complainer must be reminded again of the Divine Sovereignty, as a solemn general consideration. But, at the same time, we might appeal to his judgment,—“Is it *wrong* that the servants of God should have a hard and long trial of their patience, constancy, diligence, devotedness? That they should be put on the plain principle of labouring and persevering *because it is their Master's service?* not stipulating for any given proportion of immediate success. Unless this is to be the principle, no good and great design for the service of his cause can be undertaken, but merely as an experiment, subject to be abandoned whenever its promoters are not satisfied with the degree of its success. But what hope would there be of any Christian project begun and prosecuted in such a spirit? And truly, what grand Christian enterprise (since the Apostle's time) might not by this rule, have been abandoned? (I believe, in the case of Otaheite, there was, at one time, some doubt and deliberation whether to discontinue the attempt.) But, now, if they *had* been abandoned!

It is pleasing to remark, that in the prolonged prosecution of every good and noble design, there have been favourable uncalculated turns and conjunctures. Now, in every such instance, how delighted the patient prosecutors have been! The reflection was,—“If we had not, in spite of difficulties, and of the discouragements of slow success, resolutely persevered, *this* auspicious incident, *this* happy turn, would never have occurred, or would have been useless, if it had.” One such happy event has often been felt as almost a full reward for the slowly successful exertions of many years, or a whole life.

It may be added, that there is a peculiar honour to those who have zealously co-operated in promoting a noble cause in its earlier and less prosperous period—honour among the saints,—honour before their Master. Because *theirs* was a more generous service, a more patient resolution, a more confiding faith, than could be evinced when the cause was advancing into its triumphs. It is easy to manifest a zealous friendship for that which has victoriously fought its way through its difficulties—consigned its despisers and haters to contempt—and risen and expanded to a mighty prevalence;—though that, too, may be a sincere friendship. But, the attachment and co-operation of highest account is *that*, which adopts and aids a cause in its humble state, in its slow, early progress and contest, and labours. Therefore, to such friends and co-operators, the award will be according to the same principle as in that of our Lord to his disciples—“Ye are they who have *continued with me in my temptations*; and I appoint unto you a kingdom.” We can have no doubt that those of our missionaries who have laboured till they died in the service (especially our late revered brother WARD), are now exulting that their allotment in time was, to serve, and urge on, the good cause, in its early period of extreme toil and narrow success, *rather* than to be its active ministers at some future day of its more rapid and extended efficacy.

We said it is the greater proof and exercise of *Faith* to be zealous in promoting a good design during its “*day of small things*.” And we should consider, that it is on the sole ground and strength of *Faith* that we have any business with such designs at all. For, on any other dependence, nothing could be more visionary than schemes of converting heathens to Christianity. Considering the radical depravity of human nature generally—and in this case, its confirmation and aggravation by the most gross and deadly super-

stition — this being considered, any fancy or project of rescuing and redeeming such beings into the liberty, light, and purity of the religion of Christ, unless in a reliance on God's own intentions and assurances, would deserve all the scorn which the "*despisers*" throw on the design; they, rejecting every notion of such reliance, are consistent in their contempt.

Our confidence is because God has sent his gospel on purpose to convert the world—declared his word shall not return to him void—promised to be always with its faithful proclaimers, and predicted that all the world shall at length feel its transforming power. Faith in this is our only assurance and strength in any such undertaking. Now the special demand for this faith, and its strongest trial, are in the "*day of small things.*" Then is the proof whether we really believe and trust in the Almighty; and can act on an assurance, that though "the beginning be small, the latter end shall greatly increase." It is *no* faith that cannot be assured of the accomplishment of great things, and great promises, till they are seen to *be* accomplished; or till there be a rapid and magnificent progress toward that accomplishment; and that because mighty results are not obtained in the earlier course of operations, therefore feel as if the labour and expenditure were but thrown away. While yet this disposition may hypocritically pretend to a still higher kind of faith, in saying, "God will surely perform his word *in his own proper season*—let us leave it to Him in his better time." It were truly a strange faith—though certainly a very *easy* one—by which the professed servants of God should pretend to honour his power by withdrawing from the patient labours of his cause—that would plead, "Why should I do a little, with great toil and cost *now*, since God can do it all whenever it shall please Him?" Human means are most apt to be depreciated in terms of

false humility, by those who do not like to be at the trouble of diligently exerting them.

In our prospect onward, to the ultimate glorious success of Christianity in the heathen world, we do not look for the application of any means, any instrumentality, *extraordinary*, in that full sense in which miracles were extraordinary. But in a lower degree, that which effects the conversion of any depraved, dark, and obstinate soul, is extraordinary. In this sense, we do expect an immense display of the extraordinary in divine operation. We expect it,—because it is prophetically intimated—and because it is indispensably necessary for accomplishing the world's conversion within any reasonable compass of time.

For the present time, we must wait in faith and hope, uncertain in what progressive degrees of rapid enlargement this extraordinary intervention and action of the divine energy will be diffused over the world,—uncertain how soon may be granted what may appear the first very signal manifestation of it. But we behold the tumultuous acceleration of events and changes in the state of the world in our age; and turning thence to the visions of prophecy, we behold a corresponding representation of mighty commotions and overturnings—a torrent sweeping away in confusion and destruction the old corrupt order of the world; and all this expressly in connection with the enlargement, and for the very purpose of the enlargement, of the kingdom of the Messiah. While we contemplate, in combination, this real and this visionary scene,—we think it no extravagance to hope, that some of our younger friends here present will live to hear of the conversion of ten thousand Hindoos and other heathens, for ten, or for one, that we hear of as yet.

And will not those younger friends, in their *then* Christian *old* age, rejoice to remember that their pious

predecessors zealously, in firm faith, promoted the good cause, in its "*day of small things?*" or, that they themselves, in early life, began to lend a helping hand?

And as to the unreclaimable "*despisers,*" there will certainly come a day which shall bring upon them the sentence, "*Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish!*"

LECTURE LXII.

AGAINST WEARINESS IN WELL DOING.

GALATIANS vi. 9.

“ Let us not be weary in well-doing : for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”

It had been a most happy thing if such had been the condition of our nature that all of us should rather and sooner have been weary in everything else than in well-doing; for instance, in all the amusements and ordinary pleasures of life; but especially in *ill-doing*. But we have a grievous view of the state of our race in the fact, that a great number of men seem not tired of doing evil. We need not specify the modes and departments. But, observe, what perseverance—endurance—sacrifices—overcoming of obstacles—recovery of spirit after disappointments—what defiance of danger! One might say—“ I wish you *could* be ‘ *wearied in the greatness of your way!* ’ ”

Now, turning from this mortifying view to the other side, can we venture to set forth, and boast, an equal rivalry? Are those who approve and adopt the practice of “ *well-doing* ” equal in those enumerated distinctions? We fear not, if taken collectively. For by “ *well-doing* ” we must mean something beyond the ordinary proprieties of conduct,—things of decided Christian exertion, requiring energy and patience. And the case is, at all events, that there is great need of the exhortation, “ *Be not weary.* ” Even the most faithful and devoted workmen, in the worthiest services, are

not quite exempt from the operation of causes tending to this failure; they feel them, while they resist them.

For one thing,—there is that very prevailing temper of our nature, the love of ease,—horror of hard labour. The faculties, even such as are called active powers, delight in a kind of half-slumber—with a complacent consciousness of their existence—a self-flattery of their power,—what they *can* do, if they please. They are excited sometimes to some agreeable exercise, as long as it is agreeable. But hard effort, and under a necessity of continuing it—both soul and body naturally recoil from that. Why all this work for me to do? Am I never to be suffered to enjoy myself, and subside into the pleasant condition of having no demand upon me? Is toil still but the introduction to more toil? Oh! it has the bitter taste of the original sentence and curse, “*In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.*”

And it may be noted that the reluctance and aversion are the greater when the labour is enjoined by extraneous authority—the imperative will of a foreign power. This insults the rebellious pride of the heart; “I am then to be a slave, as well as a labourer.” And here we have partly an explanation of that wonderful patience of activity in evil-doing. It is voluntary—self-willed—acting on the impulse of the evil passions;—and those passions are a cherished part of a man’s self.

But we should be speaking of *good* men’s liability to be “*weary.*” “*Good men,*” we say; but then, unhappily, they have not a completely reformed nature. (“*Why callest thou me good?*”) How far are they from having attained that happy state in which they might “*love (and therefore actively serve) the Lord with all their heart, and their neighbour as themselves.*” They have to work for God, therefore, in the strength of but a *part* of their nature. The unreclaimed portion not only does not co-operate, but

counteracts; like a house in which there is a great business constantly to be done, requiring the activity of every one in it, but the members are at variance. What need is there to pray, "UNITE *my heart to fear thy name*," that the whole forces may be available.

In consequence of all this, is the necessity of self-denial. We might call it a mode of "*well-doing*" in itself, but we rather consider it as a requisite in order to "*well-doing*." And, can we do without it? in which important branch of duty? But it is a grievous necessity—a heavy pressure on the springs of activity and power. As if the soul must expend and exhaust its strength in fighting itself; as if conscience pointing to a duty were a signal for a battle within; or as if (to take a plainer illustration) a man appointed and required to employ himself in some field or department of labour, had a long, hard conflict to get into it. But no terms or images can be stronger than those of Scripture, "*cross*"—"wrestle"—"*mortify*"—"crucify," &c.

Again; in the service of God (the comprehensive system of well-doing) there is a great deal that does not seem (*primâ facie*) for *ourselves*. Then the selfish principle comes into operation—"Why am *I* implicated—put under obligation—with so much that is *without* the sphere of my own interests? Have I not enough to do?—even the cause of God—he is all powerful, &c., &c. And then there are these beings, who are, it is true, in a certain remote sense, *my brethren*—but why consider myself as if *made for them*? toiling to put right the numberless things wrong among them? conflicting with their ignorance and perversity? enduring, supplying their deficiencies, and necessities? doing for them, often, what they ought to do for themselves and, apparently, little good resulting after all?"

There is a principle or sentiment of *false humility* that tends to "*weariness in well-doing*." "What signifies the

little that I can do? It will make no difference. My whole account of labours and sacrifices will be but a cypher in the result; like a man who has made a long and toilsome journey, and looks to see how it will appear on a map of the world." Yet, this false humility itself may take its turn with *pride*; and the labours and services that were so insignificant—worthless for any effect—are now risen to a high estimate; a magnifying glass has been had in; the figures and items of the account stand out large. "I have done my share;—if the effect be small, it is no fault of mine. If others did like me—"

And here we may notice, as tending to the effect in question, the complaint of *deficient co-operation*. Not that this is not true, in the wide sense; for if there were all the "*working together*" in every good cause, that there ought to be, the world would be transformed by the fact itself. And in each one line of important labour there *is* this deficiency; though less so than formerly. We readily make a pause in our part of a good work, (lay down our implements to think how vastly better it would go on, *if* there were far more to work in it,—and if those who do something would do much more, ('as they ought.') We fix on *particular individuals*, regretfully—reproachfully—indignantly. We do not say, "*Lord, WHAT shall this man do?*" for we say what he ought to do, and, "*bid him that he assist us.*" We make an actual calculation of what they *could* do;—then look at the good cause as *denied* all this powerful aid and agency, with some of that feeling with which our perverse nature looks at poverty. And there is in the case something of *vanity*, that is mortified at not having the *honour* of numbers, power, &c. on our side.

It may be specified as another thing tending to "*weariness in well-doing*" that, in the cause of God (peculiarly such) the object and the effect of "*well-doing*" are much

less palpable than in some other provinces of action. It is not so evident and ascertainable *what* is effected. In the application of contrivance, labour, money, to things of a mechanical nature, or agricultural, or commercial, (or the healing art)—the degree of success generally makes itself sufficiently visible. Not so, at least much less so, in the religious and moral department. *Some* indications are *there* also. But, much of nearly latent good. Truth imparted so as never to be expelled; good principles gradually formed, fixed in silence—innumerable serious thoughts and good resolutions;—conscience impressed;—temptations frustrated;—consolation soothing distress;—an alterative effect on the habits of action; good kept from going back. Now the labourer for this kind of good can and does believe that there is such a valuable effect,—but it comes faintly to his mind,—it is not stimulant. He wants a loud echo to everything he says;—is not content that the sacred fire *is* alive, *does* burn, but does not blaze and explode,—does not throw off coruscations.

May we not add, in connexion with this, that the professed servants of the Great Master are prone to entertain toward *Him* a mercenary and distrustful feeling? They want a full and speedy return for their work; prompt payment, as it were; as if they were extremely reluctant to become creditors to the Almighty for any long term. The payments, if not doubtful, seem very slow and late. We have a narrow calculation, and yet an arrogant estimate of what, as we think, the effect of our labours ought to be. It should come within a short time, and yet it should be large. In theory, we readily admit that we are no judges of the right proportion,—or of when,—and cannot see forward to the ultimate; and yet are tempted to prescribe to the Sovereign Ruler; and require that there be adequate results (what we should think so) within our short view; else he

does not deal fairly with his servants while working for Him. This at the same time that we acknowledge that results must come in the order of his own immense scheme.

Such are the discouraging circumstances, and perverse dispositions. Now, there ought to be some considerations to be set against all this. And the first of them would be, that duty expressly prescribed, is an absolute thing, independently of what men could foresee of its results; though it be, no doubt, enjoined for the sake of results which God foresees and intends; and they such, that if good *men* could perfectly foresee and understand them, they would perfectly approve the injunction. Such *knowledge* cannot be; but perfect piety would approve by *faith*, and practically and willingly obey. That would be the elevated state in which a creature of God might say, "My duty is itself my delight for his sake; as to the results, whether I can understand them, or not, I know they will be right. '*My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me and to finish his work.*'"

But here, then, comes one consequence (or accompaniment) of "*well-doing*," as an argument against being "*weary*;" namely, the consciousness and the pleasure of pleasing God. "*Enoch had this testimony that he pleased God.*" Self-righteousness away, and imperfection and sin acknowledged, still the fact is so,—“The Supreme of the Universe fixes a complacent attention on what I am striving to do to please him.” This being vividly realised, what cause of weariness might it not be set against? Look up to heaven, and see the beams of the Divine complacency! “I obtain little of human favour to animate me in my work;—well, but God is pleased. I accomplish so little by all my efforts—but He does not '*despise small things.*'” Do you say, “I have not resolution and patience to go on.” What! not to please God? At what point can the faithful servant

be willing to cease pleasing such a master? At what new required effort may he stop, and say, "It is not worth attempting this—to please God. Thus far I have tried to please him, but now it becomes too much; I would rather, now, surrender that delight." Consider, our Master has other servants, and it should not be absolutely foreign to our contemplation (as an argument not to be weary,) that the noblest and the best of all his creatures are never tired, or even remiss. Imagine the stupendous activity—the bright multitudinous agency—every moment—in so many scenes and employments—and from before the beginning of time! And would we have the Sovereign Master to look down through all this immensity and grandeur of action, to see us throwing his business aside in disgust?

But there is the Greater than all of them,—to whom Christians are commanded to "*look lest they be wearied and faint in their minds.*" Think of his appointed work, the greatest that ever was to be done on the earth, so great, as to be a counteraction to all the sins of all the saved! and at an awful cost of endurance. What toils, what grievances, what terrors (as to his humanity) attended HIS mighty task! But if he had been "*wearied,*" and left but one thing undone! If he had shrunk and failed, what sensation in heaven—hell—earth! Let his followers advert to that, when tempted to shrink from service, and to say it is too much. When this repugnance arises, go, and look at Him! Even imagine as if any given Christian service had been to be performed *in his presence*—under his inspection;—would you then be weary? He is the grand transcendent example, to show that a good work must be *gone through with*; to constitute it such, the conclusion is indispensable. "*He that endureth to the end shall be saved.*" "*He that looketh back is not fit for the kingdom of God.*"

Against being "*weary,*" let it be considered what is the

fittest introduction and discipline for the other world. On what terms would a thoughtful spirit desire to go into it? Surely so as that there should be the greatest delight and fitness. Well, then, if it be considered as a *rest*, labour, up to the time; or, an *active* scene—bring highly exerted powers. Is it a scene for the triumph of victory? but then the good fight must be maintained up to the very gate. View it as an access to the noblest society, but then the new-comer must have belonged to the best society where he went from. In all reason, we must wish to bring, as near as possible, together, in likeness as well as time, the habits and spirit of the state we aspire to, and those in the state we quit; that it may not be a *vast abrupt*!

But, to descend to lower considerations. We might ask a man who has engaged himself in the service of God—the “*well doing*,” what relief he would gain by yielding to the weariness? When a tired labourer can repose, upon laying aside his work, that *is* something. But can our Christian labourer? Will his conscience of duty be “*wearied*” out, and be quiet? (Jonah—“*What doest thou here, Elijah?*”) Looking at his means, powers, and opportunities, will he not be ashamed to have them? They reproach him with the use he might make of them. How would a soldier who had deserted from cowardice in battle, look at his arms? When he sees (within his province) good things not done, or spoiled in the manner of doing? When he meets the complaints, or even the regrets, of those whom he declines any more to aid! When he beholds the activity of evil? Or, when he sees good works going forward, and no thanks to him? His must be a restless state, if he have conscience and generous feeling. And, then, as to the “*reaping*”—*his* reaping—that goes out of sight. He *has* (our text implies) made worthy exertions heretofore. Then let him call up to view, the motives—the reasons. Are they turned to

air? are they not valid *now*? which of them is not? Love and gratitude to Christ—do they “*constrain*” no longer? The worthy ambition of rendering some small part of the world a little better than it is—is that no longer worth the trouble of attempting? The desire of being associated in purpose and action with the most excellent of our race? Or, a confidence in the assurance that we “*shall reap*”—is that gone? But the labourers in the good cause must firmly stay by this assurance; standing, as it does, combined with a vast number of promises to the same effect; a magnificent assemblage!

We observed, that a creature perfectly good would serve God indefatigably on the pure principle of obedience;—yes, on this narrow and sublimely elevated ground. But, God has not placed his servants on this ground. No; he has set before them, bright and conspicuous, what he has condescended to call *reward*. It was so even with *Him*, who was divinely perfect, the Mediator, who, “*for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross and despised the shame.*” And, no doubt, it is so with every faithful servant in the Universe.

“*Shall reap.*”—We may take this as an assurance, *generally*, of success in the Christian labour itself; success to some valuable extent; so much as shall amply repay the labour, though less, perhaps, than desired, and sanguinely expected. But besides this—even independently of it—the persevering faithful will “*reap*” the Divine approbation and acceptance—the Great Master’s final applause! The emphasis of the “*Well done!*” will not be proportioned to the measure of success, but to the devotedness, diligence, fidelity, perseverance. As to the “*due season*,” that must be left to the wisdom of Him who has “*the times and seasons in his own power.*” Whenever it comes, it will bring perfect evidence of its being the right time; sooner had been pre-

mature. The main substance of the reaping will be in the field of Eternity!

These general observations might be brought into specific application to various departments of "*well-doing*," besides the Christian life in its general tenor;—to the concern of *education*,—whether in single families, or as to be promoted generally among the people;—to endeavours and plans for alleviating the distresses of the poor, and imparting religious instruction to them; to all exertions for improving public institutions; for abating in any and every way the corruption and misery of mankind; (heretofore the Slave Trade, and Slavery) the false religions—idolatry—imposture—superstition,—to efforts to *promote religion* among the people—that must be an object for the most cogent application of the text; the best of all the "*well-doings*" on this gloomy planet. Angels themselves can be doing nothing better, wherever they are at work; though they work in a grander style than mortals. And we know of no better methods or expedients than such as are already in use,—no undeveloped mode of power. Sometimes an impatient emotion may arise into a wish that there were some mightier, and magnificent, machinery; that there were something analogous to those prodigious augmentations of power which science has supplied to material forces; and that there were some giant agents to work the mighty engines. "The instrumentality for promoting religion should be of a strength obviously proportioned to the supreme excellence of the cause." (Fine vision of effects; but it passes and vanishes.) There is an authoritative dictate from the Master; "No, it is *you* that must work, and with such means only as I give you."

It remains, then, that we can only, teach, and reason, and plead, and exhort. Some must employ their labour in preaching; some, perhaps, in writing; some rendering their tribute in the means of giving to religion a clear property

in buildings, &c. Now, we must make a moderate, even a humble, account of these means and operations. But, let us not be depreciating their value and efficacy for the purpose of excusing a remissness, an unwillingness, to do the utmost we *can* to make them effectual. Let us not be saying, "If we had a mightier order of means, we should be glad to exert our whole strength in their application—if we could work miracles." And the while, just nothing is doing, whereas something would, if we employed the means actually in our power. Like as if men who had to make a laborious journey on foot, should sit down somewhere in it, and say, "Now, *if* we had but strong horses, commodious carriages—"

Our grave accountableness is, for making a diligent, patient, persevering use of the means God has actually given us. And so, the exhortation would address itself to *Preachers*, and to those who are looked to for the means of dedicating, in perpetuity, the requisite edifices for the services of religion. To *Preachers*; they are under a great liability to become "*weary*," as to their *thinking* labour; "*much study is a weariness to the flesh*." It is hard exercise to illustrate a subject in a *really thinking* manner; how to furnish a diversity; in presenting, again and again, the same topics, how to avoid a dull, flat sameness. They are often dissatisfied with their own performances, even when their best. They sometimes perceive signs that they very imperfectly satisfy their hearers. There is the depressing effect of seeing a comparatively small success. There is a heartless estimate of the proportion between the means and the desired, and due, effect. How much of instructive, important truth, for how much, or rather how little, practical result!

But, "*let us not be weary in well-doing*." Consider—It is no peculiar doom on them, to labour on such apparently

unequal conditions.—Every good cause, in every age, in the hands of the greatest and the best of agents, has been subject to this. But, at the same time, there *is* some success; sometimes there are conspicuous and most gratifying instances. Many good effects are perceptible though not strikingly prominent. And as to the general effect on a congregation; let it be considered what may rationally be supposed the difference, in the state of their minds, between their receiving, and not receiving into them, such a measure of important thoughts. (Suppose the perfect absence of this, or all withdrawn, everything else being equal.) And whatever be the measure, let the preacher consider the value of spiritual and moral good, by its *quality*; in the proportion of gold to the inferior, though valuable, metals. He may be prompted to say, “If it *be*, then, so precious, why does not God grant more of it?” Answer, No man on earth knows. But if the preacher were meaning to ask, in a tone of complaint, why *his* labours are not rewarded with ampler success (as *deserving* it), he would justly be smitten with a severe and humbling rebuke. It would be rating his exertions at a prodigiously exaggerated price indeed, if he should require that his course should be nothing but a triumphal procession. Let him say, if he can or dare, what measure of inestimable good would not be worth the sum of his labours. Supposing him faithful through life—and, near the end of it, to have but a very moderate account to make up of what he believes his success to have been, can we conceive him to say, “It is not worth the labour I have expended,—I might as well have given way to weariness, and let the work alone?”

But, while we take the matter thus on a humble ground, we surely may hope and trust that, with the progress of time, a higher proportion of success will attend all Christian operations. Looking forward with perfect confidence to a

bright and happy age, we are willing to hope it may not be *very* far off. And it would be according to the usual procedure of the Divine dispensations that something of what is to come should be thrown forward into the introductory period. We may hope for a change gradually advancing faster. Indeed, if Christianity do not advance more rapidly than heretofore, *the world will grow worse*; because other things of great power and consequence *are* in a state of acceleration, and they need, absolutely, that Christianity should advance parallel with them, to keep them from dreadful mischief. The elements of the moral world will be out of proportion, and immeasurable disorder the consequence. And even if there were not this necessity for the purpose of control, we cannot believe that God would let the progress of his religion be quite the hindmost,—other forms of power marching boldly on, and this left yonder, at its former slow pace, almost out of sight.

We do trust, then, that in times not very far off, the faithful promoters of religion (preachers and others) will have a stronger stimulus against "*weariness*," in the more signal success of the good cause. But then, so much the stronger faith, and more geuerous resolution, will be evinced by their resisting and overcoming the tendency to weariness *now*.

There will need, we trust, but a few closing sentences in the way of turning the exhortation to the special purpose of the present occasion—i. e. the request for aid toward making this house a clear property to the cause of God, so that it might be said every piece of stone and timber belongs to Him. And it is in the simple character of *petition*, addressed to good will, and Christian generosity, that such an object is pleaded; since, as Dissenters, we have nothing to rely upon, or appeal to, but the "voluntary principle," (a few small endowments;) that is, we can claim nothing but

what individuals may refuse. What thousands, therefore, what millions, of tokens of *free-will* are enclosed within our walls. (This, perhaps, a better *cement* than any intervention of *power* would have been.) That so much has voluntarily been done, and is doing, should be accepted as evidence of a concern for the cause of God, rather than any factious hostility to the National Church. Those who impute such a motive would marvel if they were aware how little is said in our meeting-houses, how very rarely the subject of Dissent is in any way adverted to; indeed, *too little*.

But will not the liberal voluntary principle fail us at last, under the continual claims (exactions almost) that are made on it? It will, if the exhortation in the text fail. There does often arise in the minds of contributors, the idea, somewhat in the form of an objection and resistance, "There is no end to these applications." But if there were an end to them, what would that show, but that a great expansive and beneficent agency, was stopped by some fatal limit? that some power (*what power?*) had said to it, "*Thus far, but no farther?*" And that would imply that an immense number yet remaining of the people of our land should receive little or nothing of the benefits of the Gospel of Christ. The very numerous applications show that this melancholy doom has *not* fallen upon them. And as they gradually receive the Gospel, how many of them will bless God that his servants, here and there, were not "*weary in well-doing!*"

In some instances an objection is raised, (not quite without reason,) that the undertaking is on too ambitious a scale; an edifice too spacious, decorated, costly. We need not say, the house we are now in falls under no censure. In regarding the claims of a house for the service of religion, let it be considered how long the utility may en-

dure; one long lapse of years after another, co-extended with the life of several generations. What a countless series of sentences of instructions! petitions in prayer, so many that he alone to whom they are made can keep the vast account! Blessings from Him in consequence; yes, in this very house. So that the contributed property—money—deposited in the walls (“*sunk*,” in commercial phrase) will be yielding *spiritual* interest indefinitely onward. And this is one of the ways in which some of those will “*reap*,” who are not “*weary*” of giving aid to the object. The habitual attendants, it may be hoped, will do so in their own persons, in the first instance; afterwards, in those they leave behind. The occasional friends will acknowledge that, through the medium of benevolence and love to religion, *they* may enjoy a portion of the good, a certain interest in the good, which others obtain. Happy to “*reap*” in any of these ways! But, independently of all this—there is the consideration of the Sovereign Master, the sublime perfection of all beneficence, who takes account of his servants for another world; who loses sight of no instance, throughout all time, of faithful perseverance in the good cause; loses none from his remembrance; and, in fulfilling his promises, will surpass all their expectations and conceptions. *Then* will they find that “*their labour has not been in vain in the Lord.*”

LECTURE LXIII.

THE VOLUNTARY PRINCIPLE, IN REFERENCE TO THE
ERECTION OF PLACES OF WORSHIP.

ISAIAH xli. 6.

“ They helped every one his neighbour ; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage.”

As a text is, of course, to be read for a *good* purpose, it may seem of doubtful propriety to cite language applied to a *bad* one, as here. But as Matthew Henry says, it is hard if we may not sometimes avail ourselves of what has been done and said for evil, to enforce what is good. The verses preceding seem to describe the heathens as alarmed at the striking manifestations of the true God. But instead of renouncing their idols, they went the more zealously to the work of Idolatry. There were gods too few, not shaped to every fancy, and we have a description of the process of making a new one. It seems to have been a willing service ; they were on “ *the Voluntary Principle* ;” but let it be no disparagement to that principle that *Pagans* acted on it,—unless it be better that *Christians* should support their religion on compulsion.

What the inhabitants of this planet, between willingness and compulsion, have done, in labour and cost, for false religions, is an amazing spectacle for contemplation. Think of all the heathen temples ! We have notices in history of some that have wholly or nearly vanished from the face of the earth, but that were once of great celebrity and resort. Others, described as of immense magnificence, have only

left their memorials, in parts of their foundations, in fragments of columns, pieces of sculpture, and shapeless heaps of stones. Many others, in various degrees of ruin, still exhibit prodigious grandeur and beauty; as at Athens, Rome, Baalbec, Palmyra. And there are at this day, in some regions, in a complete state, many vast structures for the service of pagan gods and abominations. So that our globe has been (if we may so speak) studded and sparkling with the splendid prominences of triumphant paganism. Evil spirits, haunting it, have had, as it were, superb palaces to go in and out of;—while good ones, sojourning, have had to survey mighty fortresses of war against heaven; and might wonder, unless instructed in the mystery of Providence.

All this has been done by *human* contrivance and labour!

Over the greater part of the earth the inhabitants have raised these proud structures against heaven; even in America, as found at its discovery; in Europe,—think only of Greece and Italy; in Asia, to an incalculable amount; in eastern Europe, and western Asia, the dazzling beauty of some, and at once the beauty and grand dimensions of others were such that we cannot wonder the popular mind was enchanted and overawed;—Egypt above all, for stupendous vastness, consuming almost half a nation's labour, and successive generations, as at Carnac. After such a view we may well doubt whether all the structures in the world for *Christian* worship have absorbed so much labour and cost as the temples of heathenism. But, if we may be allowed to throw over to the same account as paganism, all the Mahomedan mosques,—and, in addition, all that which in *Christian* edifices, has been merely for the purpose of pomp and superstition—there is no longer any comparison. The whole sum of what has been expended in buildings *really* for the service of Christianity would be as nothing in the comparison. What was *St. Peter's* for? and by what

expedients was the money raised? The same expedient was resorted to in certain of our own Cathedrals.

But it may be said,—why this excursion from one end of the world to the other, so foreign apparently, to any present business? And truly, it is a vast transition from such edifices as we have been describing, to our plain, humble, dissenting meeting-houses. But such an introductory reference has been suggested by the prominent characteristic apparent in the text, namely, *zealous co-operation*; “*every man helped his neighbour*,” and the thing was accomplished. In contemplating those astonishing works for heathen religion and other superstitions, one cannot help thinking of the immense concurrence and combination of exertions. What exercise of genius in devising—consultations on the means and proceedings—treasures profusely expended—multitudes labouring together, under vigilant incitement and direction—a world of digging and hewing.—What a troop about one stone, raising it to its position, by means which no one can now conjecture; going on from one ten years to another, and all in an assured faith that, in being acceptable to the Deity, it would be beneficial to men; all in a thousand ways “*helping*” each “*his neighbour*.” A hundred hands were engaged on a single stone; some at one part of an engine, some at another; and all in the service of religion.

Now surely this may be offered and taken as a lesson to us, on the topic of willing aid and co-operation in religious undertakings. Shall we make, in imagination, the wide survey, of so many millions of fellow-contributors to raise the most sumptuous fabrics, to be devoted in clear property to false religions and gods, and not be reminded that even these, our comparatively diminutive structures cannot be consecrated in full property to the true God but by the friendly co-operating aid of numbers? Quite generally,

this is the state of the case, with very rare exceptions, here and there. Therefore, the conduct described in our text is an excellent example for a much better business. Let it be seen what a co-operation of well-disposed neighbours can do (shall we say?) in worthy imitation of pagans. It is not, however, quite enough to recommend this practice of assistant services, working together—for a religious object. Something should be said about the principles, the rules, of the co-operation.

And the first thing would be, that there should be a genuine Christian principle, as the general ground of the proceeding; that is, an honest purpose of promoting religion itself;—to aid the thing from the desire, and in order that there may be more religion among men; a wish that the best thing under heaven, may, *because* it is so, be displayed to men, enforced on them, put in action among them; so that no inferior consideration, as for instance of party or sect, still less any bad motive, should be the chief inducement.

The Apostle tells of some who “preached Christ even of envy and strife” (Philippians i. 15). We do not know whether the people built preaching-houses, and in the same spirit, for those preachers; but if they did, St. Paul would have set small value on their contributions. And in our own time we have heard of wealthy proprietors of large works, building chapels, not caring about religion but saying, even swearing, that it mended the people.

Another requisite to an amicable co-operation is, the exclusion of jealousy and competition; we have hinted at this already. Inevitably, even among good men, there will be lines of distinction, sections, parties. And we are not going to say, that they should not do more for the advantage, each of their own, than of another. But having a great cause in common (“*the common salvation*”) they

should not indulge jealous rivalries. They should not be using such language as—"The other sect will be gaining against ours—make a greater figure."—"They are setting up an interest where we have no station."—"We are sorry we had not anticipated, and so precluded them."—"They will be more accounted of, among the inhabitants than *we* shall have the opportunity of becoming."—"In some quarters they have obtained money which *we* might have had, if we had been fortunate enough to apply first."—But on the other side,—“They are coming too near us; how much better had they occupied another district.”—"They have a station not far from one of ours;—if they obtain a very acceptable preacher they will draw away some of our people; we wish therefore they may *not*.” It shall be remarked, in a tone *betraying* satisfaction,—“Mr. Such-a-one’s congregation is said to be very thin.” I answer, “You seem pleased at it;—is it because he does not, &c.”—"N-o; n-o-t that, but &c.”—We all know there is too much of such a spirit. Yet we are willing to believe it is abating among the Dissenting communities in respect to one another; and would fast abate among all good men, if they would duly consider how much there is for all of them to do.

Again—in rendering “*help*” in a religious cause, men should not be calculating how much consequence they shall gain by it and for it.—“Will it be adequately estimated, to my praise as a benefactor?”—"Shall I rank, as I ought to do, among the supporters and co-operators?"—"Will it gain me a due share of influence, in the particular case, or in others?" Some men, in Christian societies, have rendered what would have been valuable assistance, if divested of such conditions. And some, beginning to do so, have declined and withdrawn because these conditions (mental stipulations) were not realized. Their principle of mutual “*help*” seemed to be, that *they* would help a

religious undertaking, if *it* would help them to consequence in the religious community. But let all such selfish calculating go back to the point of calculating, honestly, how much *religion* there is in all this.

If a work be, substantially, good and benevolent, "*neighbours*" should not refuse the assisting hand *for small objections*. Such may be made, and perhaps justly, to *every* good undertaking. Something or other, in the plan,—time—expedients—or management, may be objected to. If such had always where they existed, been allowed to frustrate, we may ask, what good project would *ever* have been executed? (Among the fellow workmen in the text if they had not been zealous for the object, one might have alleged, "your wood is not of the right sort,"—another, "your gold is not pure enough," &c.) Small points of objection are convenient excuses for the unwilling. The question would be, is it good in the main? Or thus,—Is it *such* a thing that, on the ground of these objections you would wish it not done at all? Do you judge that it had better not?

We may add, in some cases, where the objections to an undertaking were *antecedently*, just and even strong, its claims may be placed on a different ground, after it *is* done. We ought not to be tenacious of a first objection. For example; in cases of meeting-houses projected and built with too little calculation and prudence—shall they not be supported?

It is a very obvious thing to add, that "*help*" should be rendered in some fair proportion to ability. This is self-evident, but invidious. It is plain, however, that the little and the much are to be estimated by the quantity of the means. Such, at least, was our Lord's judgment, in the case of the widow's mite. This virtual or moral estimate claims the special consideration of that portion of the religious community which Providence has more largely

favoured. It is not for *them* to be well satisfied with themselves for rendering only a *little* larger share of aid than what is expected from those in much inferior condition. Liberal-minded persons of this inferior order are sometimes heard to complain.—The expensiveness of our “*Voluntary System*” carries its claims far downward in the religious body: and that body should be, in respect to this concern of Christian liberality, somewhat like Nebuchadnezzar’s image—the *head* should be of *gold*.

At the same time, let it be observed, that persons co-operating should not punctiliously measure their own proportion by what others do, for this is quite losing sight of the merits of the object; or, making them wholly depend on a jealous comparison, one with another, of its promoters. But who has not, in some instance, heard it said—“I allow the thing would be a good thing, but such or such persons, who *ought* to give assistance, *will* not, and therefore *I* will not?” Or again,—“As regarding the claims of the object, I should not refuse to contribute—so much, or so much,—but I will not, because I understand that certain persons (named) do not contribute at all in what I deem *their* due proportion.” That is to say,—“I will care no more for a good thing than they do, who, I am pronouncing, care far too little.—Their wrong is my right.—I will, generously, share the censure with them, by placing myself on the same ground.”

But what will a man come to, who shall adjust his rule of duty on other men’s deficiencies? Looking round to see how much less they do than even in his opinion they ought, in order that he may follow their example! Surely we might say to him,—“Do not punish the good cause itself for the fault of those who ought to be more its friends, and thus double the wrong. How would you take it if you were in pressing necessity, and a friend should

say to you—"I would do materially more for you, but that certain other friends, on whom you have unquestionable claims, are cold and parsimonious in their assistance to you?"—You would answer, "Why, that is contributing to my necessity as much as to my relief!"

Perhaps it may be a proper observation here—that in the *project* of a good undertaking, the willing promoter *may*, properly, make his liberality *conditional* on that of others, if the design appear to be plainly impracticable, unless others will render greater assistance; or if it be a project absurdly ambitious, he will rightly withhold his own.

We are saying, then, that *proportion* is to be strongly insisted on, in the general statement of duty; but, at the same time, that none are absolved from their own share on that scale, by the deficiency of others. Here let our Lord's generous justice be done (as in the instance of the widow's mite) to the smallest tribute yielded when it is in that proportion. Such tribute will be welcomed by all who have learned of him, rather than of the world's pride and idolatry of wealth.

We may observe next, that *opportune* "help" is specially valuable. An intervention apparently *in itself* not very considerable, has sometimes saved a house from burning—a ship from being wrecked;—has decided a battle;—has saved a family, or even a state, from ruin. There have been critical seasons for some religious or benevolent undertakings. Very commonly in their earlier periods especially they have needed extraordinary aid, while a first expense has lain heavy on them in the form of debt; while they have had no wealthy patrons to smile on them: when they have not had full time to show their beneficial operation; the good is to come.

Now then, Christians may look at the Pagans in our text, and "*go and do likewise.*" By such a liberal pro-

ceeding they will put a power into the hands to effect more of that inestimable good which they all profess to be desirous of effecting. And a generous man will be glad to see that what is power in his own hands is conveyed to become power in others. It will help to reclaim another piece of the world's wilderness for Christ. While they are saying "*thy kingdom come!*" each will remove out of its way one obstructive stone, to put it into the walls of the House of Prayer. Each may say—"I *pray* for it, and I have *done* a little more to prove that my prayer is not empty words!" like Cornelius's devotions; "*thy prayers and thy alms are come up for a memorial before God.*" And the grand consideration in all this is, that it is to be done for God; and not to be regarded as a mere *personal* favour, to a local interest, congregation, or preacher, though they will feel it to be *that* too. It is to pray for the munitions and operations of war on his enemies' territory; or, it is to pay for the compact of peace between him and some of those enemies. The call for help ventures to take his condescending words, Come to "*the help of the Lord.*"

We should briefly take up the latter words of our text, "*Every man said to his brother, Be of good courage.*" The employment creates a kind of fraternal relation. We need not dwell on the value of courage, as a principle of power,—as an actual cause of success,—as something greatly additional to the bare means. It seems to transmute means and instruments into a higher quality than their natural one; as if there were a power to turn wood into iron, or inferior metals into silver and gold; so very different are the very same means in the hands of a courageous or a cowardly agent. If any one ask what *need* of courage in a good cause, the answer is,—"*What will timidity and despondency accomplish, when there are obstruction, resistance, hard effort, slow success?* Think, but for courage, how many

a good enterprise would never have been attempted,—or if attempted would have come to nought. (The Reformation; missions to savage tribes.) *Bad* designs have demanded this quality to a vast amount. In the mighty darings of evil, think, what resolution, what confidence amidst unpromising beginnings, what braving of opposition and danger, what energy of execution! In such a view, what dishonour in the servants of God to be looking at nothing but the discouragements,—anticipating nothing but failure, making *Fear* the interpreter of every sign.

Still, *is* there good ground for courage, in Christian undertakings? Nobody doubts it, as to the general and ultimate success of the Christian cause. But in any particular case—for the *general* can only prosper by the *particular*, as in the one which is our present object. Consider, how many congratulations are passing round in our Christian community; on what subject especially? Why this;—that here and there, there is rising up a new religious interest,—in a desolate, rude, and almost barbarous district—in some place itself newly growing into a populous neighbourhood;—in the neglected outskirts of some great town,—where there was much to discourage beforehand, from the attempt; difficulties in the outset and the first stage; but remarkable incidents in favour, with hopeful appearances and progress at present. You are sure to hear of these events; one infallible channel of intelligence is the Beggar;—this mode of receiving the intelligence, makes, in the first instance, rather a grave impression. It is on reflection that the pleasing sentiment arises, and we say, —“Here is evidence that religion is in progress; here is proof how much in the right the beginners were, in saying each man to his brother ‘*Be of good courage!*’”

We may not irrationally indulge the imagination of what some of these Christian stations will have become some

twenty or thirty years hence ; or by the time of the old age of those who are young with the young interests. The Christian cause there is like the Banyan tree. It is a circumstance of encouragement to a new or recently commenced interest, that *some* attention to religious observance is becoming much more associated with a sense of decency, or say, respectability. Many are beginning to feel that it looks low, and vulgar, and disreputable never to attend a place of worship ; that they shall be regarded with a kind of contempt by what are called the better classes. If this feeling bring them, 'tis well, so far ; or even if idle curiosity or civility to a relation, or the example of a neighbour, bring them ; any cause, in short ; and it is quite certain that such influences will be in operation, more and more. All this says, "*Be of good courage !*"

We may advert to the fact that, from all causes together, there is a vast increase of external attention to religious worship. Think of the condition of the millions in former times ! worse than heathenism, and bad still to a fearful extent. But there is a great abatement of the rancour, annoyance, and outrage of former times. We are comparatively like persons having escaped from a mob into quiet company : this is attributable in some degree to the Law. But, besides that, there is an increasing sense, however crude in many minds, that there *is* something in religion, after all ; that those who are under its influence are worthier persons, and that they are more safe for the *end* of things ; also, there are the proofs in actual instances, of the good effect in the amendment of temporal condition.

Education, again ;—whatever advancement we do, or shall, make in that knowledge will, surely, not be suffered to carry off its pupils further from religion than where ignorance and barbarism would have left them. No ; it must, by the measure of religious instruction mingled in the dis-

cipline, it must place them more in the neighbourhood, so to speak, of religion, more within hearing of its call, and better understanding its language;—having in the soul something that is compelled to answer, at least silently, to its voice. So that the instructed are not left *able* to say, with perfect ease, “I know nothing at all about that,—it can be no concern of mine.” The religious truths, the solemn ideas, introduced and fixed in the mind, by anything but a wretchedly conducted education, will be something whereon to lay hold,—afford, shall we say, handles. Especially the schools immediately attached to our places of worship may be reckoned on, for a successive accession to the assembly of *hearers* of the gospel—many of the children themselves, when grown up—their relations—and their descendants through generations yet far off. And there is an assured foresight, that a portion of them, through the uncalculated numbers onward, will be of Christ’s disciples, and primarily owing, in this particular neighbourhood, to the raising of the very walls which at this moment enclose us. But then, who shall estimate the difference between the existence of such a local resort for worship and instruction, and what the case would have been if it had not existed? There are, besides, in and around such a local station, other religious and benevolent operations, less public and formal, but auxiliary to them. The principle of co-operation is fast gaining ground in our religious communities, in combining various modes of agency. There are more persons to say, in their useful efforts, “*Brother, be of good courage.*”. Courage is greatly augmented by the conjunction of associate workmen. If to a solitary labourer be added two, three, or four more, he seems to become himself more than he was before. Each does not only *say* to his brother, “*Be of good courage!*” but practically helps him, and does not *let* him give in. Let it be observed that *true* courage is a

patient quality. There may be bravery that has its fits, and darings, and explosions, and performs achievements by temporary impulses; but the true courage keeps firm, takes its time, and goes steadily forward.

In coming to an end, it is quite to our purpose to observe, that this exhortation, "*Be of good courage!*" is highly gratifying and animating when it comes from persons who have much ability, with equal willingness, to render assistance. The good will and kind wishes, when there is no ability, are welcome, and esteemed as they ought. The small contribution, when the means are very limited, is of as much value, as to the motive, and in the sight of God, as a much larger in a different case. But, for practically efficient aid, in this kind of co-operation, it is very desirable to become indebted, (shall I say) to those who, having received more liberally from Providence, regard it as a trust, and themselves as God's stewards.

To the highest class in point of opulence, we have no access. They would regard with contempt such a thing as a plain Baptist, or any other dissenters' meeting-house. It is striking and melancholy to contemplate such men, leaving their enormous wealth behind, and carrying their account to the tribunal; (the late —— for instance, the commander of millions). While they live, the "god of *this* world" has them and their wealth; they depart to find there is a God in *another* world. Also, as dissenters, we have no key to the great treasury of state-provision; and we can answer for our main and consistent tribe, that we would not accept that key, if offered; let it rust till corroded to atoms, for us. We only ask to be exempted from all demands from that quarter. They might really understand that we have enough to do on our own account, in our *voluntary* exertions for trying, under God's help, to enlighten and reclaim a most miserably-neglected people. There is a wonderful

lack of knowledge, or excess of prejudice, in the small account made, in some parts of the national community (legislature included), of what is voluntarily done by Dissenters, for religion and moral improvement, throughout the land. Their immense and encreasing expenditure, their numerous and frequented places of worship, with the adjunct of schools, and their multifarious exertions in other ways, seem hardly to come even in sight, when the discussion is about the means of religious instruction in the land. Or, if a fact of such magnitude *does* obtrude on attention, it is accounted so much done and expended just for the indulgence of a perverse sectarianism.

Well; our "*praise*" not being "*of men*," let it be "*of God*." And truly, no praise that men could bestow would be an adequate reward; it would be an empty honour set against a substantial sacrifice. The loftiest eulogies conferred by the most elevated portion of society, by courts, and parliaments, and hierarchies, and nobles, would be a poor equivalent for what Dissenters have had to do, are doing, and must continue to do, in the service of religion: would be no equivalent, even for what you, my friends, are requested to do this day.

Let our service to the cause of God be a genuine tribute and offering to God himself, in the humble faith and hope that we effect a little,—a little (but clearly discerned and condescendingly apprehended by him) in that great introductory process by which he will at length transform this miserable world into "*the kingdom of God and his Christ*;" so that, when that great consummation is come, it shall be in *his* memory that we, in our short sojourn on earth, had given our humble co-operation with his servants, and even with Himself,—"*workers together with God*."

Oct. 1840.

LECTURE LXIV.

ON THE INSTITUTION OF PREACHING.

PREACHED ON BEHALF OF THE BRISTOL BAPTIST COLLEGE IN 1820.*

ROMANS x. 14.

“How shall they hear without a Preacher?”

IN looking forward through the course of the future generations of our race, we see them constantly subject to a number of great and urgent wants, which must be supplied.

* In 1822 Mr. Foster wrote an Address on behalf of this Institution, from which the following paragraphs are extracted (omitting some local and special references), for the purpose of illustrating some of the topics in the discourse:—

“A very little rational consideration of the mental resources and exertions, required in a man who is to explain and inculcate the comprehensive system of the Christian doctrine and morals, in a ministration to multitudes in public, and to individuals in private, of all ages, and of every diversity of disposition, capacity, and situation, and that ministration continued through many years, might suffice to show the importance of his having a considerably extended introductory portion of time, to be devoted to the diligent improvement and exercise of all his faculties, to the acquisition of materials for his work, and of rules and methods for performing it in a worthy manner. His whole subsequent life, indeed, is to be a course of improvement; but this introductory period, well employed, will be of inestimable use in forming his mind to the right habit for it, and inuring him to the labour.

“Among Dissenters it is of peculiar importance to afford this advantage to young men preparing for the Christian ministry; because, as we do not fix this appointment on a portion of our youths as a mere professional destination, without a regard to piety and ability, it must frequently happen, that the persons in whom these indispensable requisites become

And, we instantly see *how* they will be supplied. We foresee a long succession of the produce of the earth—diffusive verdure, and ripening harvests; all the labours and rewards

apparent at the age of manhood, will be such as have not enjoyed the advantages of a regular education.

“ We watch with great interest every remarkable manifestation of such a character in young men of our congregations. To observe this disclosure is very gratifying on their own account. But it is not long before we begin also to think, of what value these qualifications might be, as applied to the special service of Christianity. When we consider the state of that great cause in the world, and in our own country, it is impossible not to wish that a far larger share of the talent existing in the community could be laid hold upon, and drawn forth into the operations of this consecrated field. Even in beholding the great division of mental ability which carries no marks of relation to piety, and seems as if it knew of no such thing in the world, there will often arise the wish, together with a consciousness of its being a wish in vain, that an ample share of this had been just so much energy and agency in the promotion of religion. But it is with more especial regret that we sometimes reflect, that here and there are individuals, whose superior mental endowments, being combined with piety, seem to be marked as expressly belonging to the cause of God; but who yet are withheld by one prevention or another, from being effective in that service. . . .

“ Reverting to the desirableness of bringing into full activity as much as possible of the genuine talent existing among our religious youth, let it be considered what an extensive and various agency is continually going on in the promotion of all that is evil. *That* operation never intermits, for it is possessed of the principle of perpetual motion vainly sought in mechanics. It is incited by *that* innate depravity which is combined with all human existence, and is never tired of activity. That activity challenges your attention on all sides; it meets you in practices which are working a still greater than their immediate and absolute evil, by incessantly throwing out a malignant force of example; maintaining as it were, a standard model and encouragement for sin, and thus emboldening other men to do the same: it meets you in language which is every hour teaching folly and iniquity to numbers beyond calculation, in youth and every stage of life. This too, is *successful* activity, and *efficacious* instruction. Now, is it not infinitely desirable, that amidst, and in opposition to, all this, there should be a greatly augmented portion of ability and zeal sent forth into action for

of agriculture; also the mechanical and many other arts. They will also want government and legislation; and there is no fear that the supply of this should ever fail.

truth and righteousness? There are among our religious youth some spirits—we hope not a few—which a process of intellectual discipline would render of great value for the better cause, would accomplish for teaching, and proclaiming, and protesting against the prevailing impiety and wickedness. And should not the religious community regard itself as in a measure pledged to God, that these minds shall be rendered efficient, by being brought out to the best advantage, against that wide and powerful co-operation for maintaining the dominion of depravity? As individuals, men will, we are admonished, be charged as criminals for burying their talents in the earth; but we would suggest, whether the religious community ought not to consider the best endowed minds it may contain, as talents belonging and entrusted to it in its collective capacity; and whether it can be altogether acquitted of the same guilt, if it do but little toward rendering these capable minds the most effectual agents that they might be, for religion.

“Let it again be considered, what a prodigious calling forth of ability there has within our times been in all other modes of activity. It might seem as if the human mind, in this part of the world, had nearly slept out its long deep sleep, and were now in lighter morning slumbers, ready to awake at any call. In our nation especially, there has been displayed what appears, in comparison with the state of our ancestors, almost a preternatural restlessness to be in action; so that the various objects of human interest, whether serious or trifling, have excited such a measure of faculty and ardour in the pursuit of them, as to raise our wonder at the capabilities of man. A surprising number of able spirits have been impelled into every department of literature, of science, of arts, of curious research, of enterprise for remote discovery, of schemes for the change of public institutions, and of the dreadful business of war. Now, while we behold this vast amount and superfluity of talents directed to every other purpose, can we be content without an effort to bring forward the best of the remaining abilities, to prosecute an incomparably nobler object? Are we willing that *this* should obtain but a much slenderer proportion in the distributive allotment of cultivation, intellect, and genius?

“It is true that the cause of religion has not remained stationary as it respects the number of intelligent and faithful promoters, while different and opposite interests have been receiving so ample an accession. The

But they will want to be taught Religion ; and how must this want be supplied ? There will always be the Bible,—numbers of instructive books,—domestic teaching in serious

new spirit which has arisen among men, to propel them in such masses, in all directions of interest, fancy, or ambition, with an incitement to go further than men had ever gone before, has, under the divine destination, sent us a large reinforcement for the work of God and human renovation. But we feel that we want a still much larger proportion of the minds impressed with the new impulse to exertion, when we look upon the condition of the people of our towns and villages throughout large tracts of the country. No one who has surveyed any considerable circuit, with a reference to religion and morals, has the smallest difficulty in naming one spot, and another, in a too long succession, where the genuine religion of Christ is but just beginning to make itself heard, and some places where it has not begun. In many of these situations, the people are wondering what wild absurdity, or designing quackery of religion, it can be, that is working its way into their neighbourhoods. They can hardly believe that men in their right senses, unless with some dishonest purpose, can employ themselves in the propagation of such folly. They had always imagined that religion enough, and of the right old standard quality, was to be had in the place before, by any that wanted it. Ludicrous stories, without number, are made and circulated in the neighbourhood, respecting the strange novelty, and the expressions, gestures, and personal adventures, of the men who come to publish it. Nevertheless, when it comes quite close to them, they are tempted to hear it, notwithstanding their prejudices and scorn ; so that experience is continually proving that, with here and there an excepted place, there are sure to be hearers where there are zealous preachers. Some salutary coercion of a superior power compels them, in a manner which themselves cannot account for, to go again and again within reach of the voice of the fanatic. Is it not, then, most desirable and important, that there should be a great addition to the number of such voices, for the sake of such hearers ?

“ In many places where these efforts have been made for several years, with hopeful signs of success, it is in but a very scanty measure, that the ministers stationed at the distance of many miles from such districts or villages are able to extend their labours thither. The deficiency is but imperfectly supplied, either in kind or frequency of service, by less competently qualified teachers, belonging to our religious societies. Here it will not be imputed to us that we can mean any disparagement to the

families,—and that occasional instruction which wise and religious men will be giving to those around them. There will be the instructive admonitory events of Providence,—

efforts of those worthy and useful labourers. On the contrary, we estimate them highly, rejoice exceedingly in their increasing number and activity, and wish that many more may speedily be excited to do like them,—provided always, that, while they proceed in teaching others, they be assiduous in the use of all attainable means for their own progressive improvement.

“ But, at the same time, it is plain to common sense, that it must be of vast importance to the honour and success of religion, that as many as possible of its public teachers should be men of great mental cultivation,—exercised in regular and even severe labours of thinking,—possessing a free and yet accurate command of words, on the right choice and disposition of which it depends whether their thinking shall be worth anything to other men,—furnished with a considerable store of various knowledge,—and qualified to appear to advantage in society. The necessity that many of our preachers should stand thus high, is becoming the more apparent and urgent from the very circumstance on which we have been remarking; namely, the constantly increasing number of such preachers as have enjoyed but a very limited degree of the privilege of education, either in early or more advanced youth. While the number of these is so fast augmenting, it must be the wish of every considerate person among our religious friends, that our ministers of the most cultivated order should still be of a number to preserve some *proportion* to them, both for the sake of maintaining the respectability, in the view of the community, of a vocation with which religion is so much implicated, and that there may be in every place, men whose evident superiority may exert an influence, of example, advice, and moral control, over those of subordinate qualifications. A minister respected for his clearer intelligence, and more extensive attainments, may be a centre of combination and influence to a little band of these auxiliaries, and dispose their operations in such a manner as to render them doubly useful. . . .

“ We hardly need advert to the obvious consideration of the demands made upon our institution for preachers to occupy the places of the elder ones successively removed by death,—except to observe, that there is not one of those venerable servants of Christ, who would not, in laying down his work, desire that his successor might excel him in every qualification for the service; and devoutly pray, if the thought were suggested to him,

dispensations which express great truths, display the Divine attributes, and illustrate the great maxims of eternal justice.

But there must also be a continuance of the old tried

for all prosperity to the institutions for preparing young men to carry forward the good work which he and other faithful labourers are resigning. Especially that institution under the benefit of which they had attained their own preparatory improvements, has often been seen to be an object of affectionate interest with them to the last. And if their people profess to feel any sympathy with that sentiment, and to have received important spiritual advantage from a minister who had been there himself instructed how to instruct *them*, they will surely be willing to make an effort, not only to prolong, but to enlarge, the usefulness of such an institution.

“When speaking of the demands for successors to departed ministers, we may notice a striking difference between the present and past times. Half a century since, it was chiefly in reference to the number of ministers expected to be withdrawn by death, that our religious societies measured the extent of means necessary for the education of young preachers. If a due provision was made for the supply of the old stations as they should become vacant, it was no very pressing consideration, that possibly, as rather a rare event, a new place of worship might now and then be raised in another situation. Happily, now the case is quite altered; insomuch that the probable number of preachers that may die, is become the minor part of the calculation of the number of new ones that may be required. Our ministers now, instead of wearing out their life in a course of solitary labours, to be transferred at death to their successors, see younger ones rising up on every side, to co-operate with them. Stations for constant public service are multiplied, and continuing to multiply, on tracts where formerly one edifice, become grey with time, was the sole receptacle of the true worshippers, during a period as long as the average of human life. And besides these regular services, there is an extensive variety, as we were before observing, of occasional and experimental ones. Many barbarous and almost pagan districts are disturbed by zealous spirits who are reconnoitering, approaching, and invading them.

“We may justly rejoice in the advantage we possess, as Dissenters, in being at liberty to vary and accommodate our modes of operation. We are bound up by no ecclesiastical formalities and prescriptions. When we seek to make an impression on some portion of an ignorant, thoughtless, and wicked population, we can extend our preaching, either directly, or in well-contrived advances, to their own territories, instead of remaining

expedient of PREACHING. It was in use under the ancient dispensation. It has been the grand instrument in promoting Christianity ; and it is to be employed through all nations and ages. It is quite a natural rational expedient

fixed immovably (like men shut up in a garrison, while they should be skirmishing over the wide field) in stations where none might ever give themselves the trouble to come in our way, to receive a stroke on their consciences. And our efforts have not been at all the less beneficial, for the degradation of preaching in a humble school-room, in the farmer's barn, or shed, or kitchen, in an unoccupied workshop, or on the deck of some old hulk,—unhallowed places ! but in which has been developed, in very many instances, the germ of a zeal which has resulted, within a few years after, in a commodious and well-frequented meeting-house.

“ Let not, however, the views here presented be dwelt upon in the spirit of self-congratulating vanity : they are intended for the purpose of admonition and solicitation. It will surely appear desirable that our public preaching, with all its accompanying secondary expedients of religious instruction, should be vigorously continued and still further extended, both in its ordinary exercise, and in its more irregular and excursive operations. But what if ignorance, mental imbecility, or the rashness of undisciplined zeal, should become conspicuous in the prosecution of this great service ? Let any sensible friend of religion recollect in what manner he has been affected by examples which he may have witnessed of this kind ; what influence he thought such exhibitions likely to have on the several classes of hearers ; what remarks of some of them he gladly escaped from listening to. And then let him say if it be possible, consistently with a sincere concern for the Christian cause, to be indifferent whether the greatest attainable measure of understanding, judicious thinking, appropriate language, and illustrative knowledge, shall pervade an active system which aims at making men wiser and better. He certainly will not say, in answer to this, that the efficacy of the ministration depends on that Spirit whose power is not limited by the quality of the means. We all know *that*, right well. But it is just as clear a truth, that the professed friends of the gospel will never be admitted, by its Author, to have proved their sincere care for its honour and progress, by a carelessness respecting the fitness of the means and instruments, while the great and lasting mischief done to it by ill-adapted instruments has been a plain matter of fact before their eyes.”

for maintaining and promoting Religion among mankind. It is in the very plainest order of means.

We might note a few particulars in the way of showing its adaptedness. It is but just worth noticing what an advantage *living* instruction has over the other forms. This is true of instruction generally; our particular business at present is with Preaching. And we may remark, that it falls in with the social propensities of mankind. They have a wonderful delight in coming together in large numbers. They are always just in readiness to come together. They seem the least to like themselves when alone. They are pleased therefore with anything that gives a fair occasion or pretext for doing so. Not that they so much love one another. But there is, perhaps, a feeling as if human nature were magnified, and therefore the individual's own little portion of it. A better feeling is, that the business, the subject, seems magnified. The institution of Preaching avails itself of this, whatever may be the principle of the feeling. The people hear religious truth under the interest of a large sociality. Each hears it as that which a great number more persons think worth hearing, and with the most serious deportment that these persons at any time display.

While adverting thus to the *number* of the persons that hear the Preacher, we may notice the grand advantage there is in this circumstance, in respect to economy of exertion on the part of the Teachers;—how much is done with a little,—comparatively speaking. One mind, at one act, conveys ideas into a multitude and diversity of minds, like a shower. The multitude consents to become as one person to hear one; suspending all their diverse individual employments, that they may in a large company meet Him, an individual. What a vast expense of the Teacher's labour it would have been to have said so much to so many persons taken indi-

vidually, or in families. An immeasurable labour which must have worn months and years away! And indeed if the Instructor could (according to some of the wild fantasies of the Hindoo mythology) *become many men*, for the work, there would not be found any opportunity for the private instruction of all these auditors. With how few of them could he find any fair opportunity! Besides, he can say what he thinks may be useful to each one, far more freely and boldly, when he is to say it to several hundreds, than he could to almost any individual.

We may observe further, with respect to these assemblies of hearers, that by means of the Institution of Preaching many are receiving some religious information who would otherwise receive absolutely none. Do you, in thought, resolve a numerous congregation into the particulars, in all their places, and make a charitable computation of the proportion that would hear and read something about religion in the course of the week, if there were no Preaching. But would *they* not do it less? And how large a remaining number that would not do it at all! Follow them in thought,—this person and that. They would be worse than most of the Pagans; at least, they would pay incomparably less attention to anything concerning Religion.

It is mainly by the institution of preaching that Religion is kept a conspicuous thing, a public acknowledged reality; so much being said about it, in so many people's hearing, and so often. This keeps it in view as something which mankind agree should be thought of. If we are told that we ought rather to say it is *Public Worship* that has this effect, we have to answer, that Public Worship, *separately from preaching*, has a very small effect in favour of Religion, as far as instruction,—information, is concerned. It is quite certain, that where the conductors of that worship have not knowledge and religion enough to

preach, that worship will be little more than a ceremonial routine of forms. And for the effect of such worship, observe the glaring matter of fact! Many of you have seen the state of the people's minds in places where the preaching has long been performed as a brief but heavy trifle in the service.

There is another advantage of this administration of religious instruction to a great number together. It makes all be witnesses to all that they have heard it. Each one hears all the assembly told the same truths, and put under the same obligations. The individual has a certain indistinct sense that a great number can testify what he ought to be,—how solemnly he has been warned. Sometimes he may encounter the direct expression of this testimony, from some one. "This is not as we have been taught—you and I." Sometimes the solemn idea will strike the mind of a hearer, while he happens to look over the assembly,—“We shall all at the Last Day be witnesses against one another, that all of us heard these things.” There is some good influence we think from the kind of moral check which the hearing part of the community have upon one another. Each knows what the conscience of each of the others says to him. And thus all are, in some small degree, prompters to the consciences of all. Each has a kind of power to set each one's conscience in action.

A preaching ministry is an advantageous thing, again, as something for the popular mind to lean upon, in respect to opinion on religious subjects. We are for having all men to exert their own independent judgment in religion, as much as ever they can. But after all, a great number absolutely will lean to something as naturally as some plants will; partly from indolence;—partly from being sensible that they have neither the time nor the other requisites for deeply examining. They would, therefore, sink into either perplexity or indifference. Now then, it *is* a convenient

thing, and we think a beneficial thing, on the whole, that an intelligent, thinking public teacher should—not be regarded as an oracle, but as a guide, a support. Many really cannot examine all the things which yet is very desirable they should admit in their judgment.

It is still another advantage of the institution of preaching, that it tends to secure that religion shall be made a subject of regular study, of deep and prolonged thought, in some part of the community. What would be the consequence, if none had to think of religious truth more studiously, with harder exertion, than would be required in such easy reading and talking as most would be apt to be content with? It is an important thing, then, that there should be a good number of men, constrained by their office and duty as teachers, to apply their minds much more intensely and assiduously to the subject; an important advantage, we mean, for the community. The subject is thus kept before men's minds in a fuller, clearer, larger form; it is not suffered to dwindle, in men's view, to a slight, scanty, superficial thing. The general state of religious thinking cannot be kept moderately high, but by there being a considerable number of persons *very* high. And if some attain conspicuous eminence in this capacity, will it not be a good thing to have some of the human eminence in this bad world thus strictly combined with religion? Why, men are pleased that some of their race should attain a more eminent ground by excellence in science and learning, by devising works of temporal advantage, and even by *war*! Is it not a better thing still, that here and there a man should excel those around him by this distinction—the wisdom of religion? As mankind do and will delight to look up at men somewhat above the general level, it surely were well there should be some that could not be looked up to, but Religion must be so too?

For many reasons, then, there should be preachers. How are the properly qualified ones to be obtained? To many nothing would appear more ridiculous than to make a question about this. To them we should seem like men gravely thinking, deliberating, planning, for means to get over a river when there is a great wide bridge just before their faces. The method has been settled, throughout the whole Christian world, as it is denominated, for a great many ages;—an established Church, a hierarchy, a priesthood. The powers of this world have judged our Master too arrogant or too humble, in saying, “*My kingdom is not of this world;*”—too arrogant if he meant it was quite above alliance with, or dependence on, temporal power;—too humble, if he meant it should not aspire to such high patronage and alliance. They have decided that *his* kingdom should be a part of theirs, regulated by their will, and having its authority in their strength; nay, having even its very principles, its doctrines, in their appointment and sanction.

It would be little to our present purpose to go at all into the controversy. We only observe generally that that which is essentially secular and political, cannot be essentially religious. A national Hierarchy (that is, a system of Priesthood,) constituted by the temporal government,—would, mainly and necessarily, be constituted by men that knew nothing about real Christianity, cared nothing about it, and had a direct preponderating interest to make the Institution subservient to the purposes of State. The system would be naturally and necessarily, a scene for the excitement and fullest exercise of the great secular passions; the thirst for emolument, the ambition, and a long gradation higher and higher to keep it perpetually in action; thence competition and homage to temporal power. And then in the conducting of the system; that is, in the patronage, and the course of the appointments, what could be expected, but that

worldly claims and merits should have the habitual preference? Rank, high connections, political weight, and talents devoted in their exercise, to the service of the State authorities? And then, for the effect:—look to the effect of all this through many centuries of the History of Europe;—the despotism over conscience,—the profound ignorance of all Christendom,—the non-existence nearly of the Christian Religion on earth,—and the horrible persecutions.

But not to dwell on these gloomy distant visions, look back to a comparatively recent period—(say one age of man, seventy years since)—and see what such an institution of preachers had by that time done for the people of England. Within the recollection of our immediate ancestors, what was the state of the people, in regard to Christian knowledge? Yet they were all within the charge and jurisdiction of the Hierarchy. And if now happily a certain portion—a small section comparatively, of that vast Hierarchy is working in a very different manner, and to a very noble effect, in what light are those persons regarded by the great body of that Priesthood? They are deliberately regarded and solemnly pronounced fanatics, and the most pernicious schismatics. And again, how has this very partial reformation arisen? Has it not arisen from without? from an invasion of the influence of the prodigious activity and increase of religious persons in the region outside the consecrated ground? And yet, all this while, that Hierarchy has been invested with a most mighty combination of powers and means; the power of the state has been in them and with them; the main stream of the learning, and vast wealth.

Now we think, that as we asserted before, there *should* be many Preachers; we may aver, next, that there should be many *Dissenting* Preachers. They would be required, even though that Hierarchy really did what it is professedly designed for. It could but very imperfectly even then,

extend its operation to the whole national mass, unless it greatly altered its regulations. And then there are all our settled congregations and Christian societies, the Preachers to which are continually becoming silent by death. "*How shall they hear without a Preacher?*" Could we be content for them to disperse hither and thither,—to scatter and disappear? the meeting-houses be surrendered to secular uses, or to the ivy and the owls?

But then, how to furnish forth these required Preachers? The Dissenters have one very great disadvantage attendant on the *right* principles of their system. The men brought to the ecclesiastical service in the Establishment are educated for it from their early youth, as being for the most part destined for it at that period. They can be consistently so destined, because any proofs of personal piety are not considered as an essential prerequisite, nor of abilities in any manner above the most common. It is quite evident there is no such rule of selection. Now, both these, we trust will always be held indispensable by the Dissenters. But then, the young persons coming forward with both these requisites, will often not have enjoyed, in the desirable degree, the advantages of early cultivation. Especially while the state of Education is so lamentably and disgracefully low as it is among the Dissenters. How clearly necessary then these Institutions which we call Academies, to enable the hopeful spirits which are rising here and there in our religious societies to *redeem* past time, and make a strenuous rise of the present. It is a sign of improving sense among us that the prejudices against them are passing away. We do not so often hear the language, "Give me a man with the grace of God, and then give the book-learning, if you will, to the Apostles of Satan." There is some hope the people will become wise when they are not content for ignorance to teach them. It is now generally comprehended

to be no small matter for one human mind to be qualified to be the instructor and guide of several hundreds of others, through life into Eternity. To this end it is a great advantage for the rising teachers to enjoy an ample term of clear disengagement from secular concerns—to be placed in a decidedly intellectual scene, (so to speak,) where everything is directly for thinking, is adapted to do something for the mind; where a prolonged attention may be given to the most important matters. It is the design of these Institutions, that their students should by their own will, pass under a system of strong, habitual, mental discipline,—a painful discipline of great self-denial; no idle gentleman's lot. The courage and industry that can sustain it fully, and go through with it, deserve very great respect. The object is most important, to the students and to their future hearers; it is, that they may at once acquire the complete power and use of their minds; and stores of materials to work upon and apply to use; the whole art and habit of *Thinking*, and a still widening field for the exercise of this power. It is here that the men preparing to be Teachers, may be trained to think with the wisest and best teachers of other times; here they may make some introductory progress in an acquaintance with the religious authors who have thought the most deeply and extensively, and written the most powerfully and eloquently, on the most important subjects; they will see how those great spirits worked their progress, and endeavour to be their companions; they will stretch and strengthen their faculties by the exertion;—will acquire a soundness of judgment;—will be affected by the piety, the devotion, of some of those admirable minds;—will acquire an utter dislike of shallow discursiveness, of idle flourish;—will appropriate the most valuable thoughts, not for mere repetition, in the words of their authors, but, they will be adopted by the student's own judgment,

mingled with his own thinking, and expressed in his own words.

We have mentioned *words*,—and it is no small part of the business in question to obtain a thorough mastery of *words*. It has been the ignorant objection of the disapprovers of Academies for young Preachers—“A great part of their time there is wasted about the knowledge of *words*.” Little were they aware either what a labour it is, or how important it is, to acquire such a knowledge and command of words as a preacher, in these days, should possess; we mean, in his own language,—to give a decidedly true expression to his thoughts,—to vary the language in order to explain,—to vary in order to avoid a tiresome sameness and repetition. There is no exact apprehension of the ideas, either in the hearers or the teacher, unless he has a good mastery of language. The objectors we have alluded to, have perhaps heard a man who had never given any attentive study to words, run on, nevertheless, with great volubility. But if there had been any one to whisper in the hearer’s ear—“What do you precisely *understand* by that?”—!

We need not observe how much the study of the scriptures is necessarily, *a study of words*. Nor need we dwell on the great advantage of a tolerable knowledge of the ancient languages for this purpose of studying the bible, as well as for drawing benefit from what we name the profane authors.

Again, in these institutions, the rising teachers have the advantage of the instructions of tutors who have long exercised the minds in the same studies, and generally their talents in the same public Christian vocation. Under their instruction these pupils begin the practice of turning all they are learning to the account of public religious service. Here too, in studious retirement, they may contemplate what is before them, from a deliberate, solemn, comprehen-

sive estimate of the vocation. And in some of their social hours they may most beneficially discuss so important a subject. We only add, that the solitude of an academical apartment should be a favourable place for the cultivation of reflection, and personal internal piety.

In drawing to a conclusion, we need not observe how much the verification of all we have said of the advantages of an academy, depends on our young friends themselves. And in the case of *this* Institution, we are authorized to express a gratifying confidence that the students will do justice to the advantages which it affords. If what we have been representing, of what Academies may and should be, shall be seen actually realized, these institutions will be among the most honourable things in the world. Let others name and applaud whatever they please, *we* shall be able confidently to name the Dissenting Institutions for young preachers. And then the preachers will have an important effect, and an honoured character in the community. We may observe here, how much this effect and this estimation must now and henceforward depend on the qualities of the men, how little on any imposing influence of their official capacity,—their class. There was a time when the ecclesiastical class had a great influence on the people's minds by virtue of some attributed sacred character;—the dissenting ministers had a share of it. But this sort of superstition is very much broken up and will never be revived. This is one of the phenomena of these revolutionary times. It is partly the consequence of what has been so glaringly manifest in the character of the priestly class—inefficiency, worldliness, and profligacy. And in honesty we must add, as to the Dissenters, that the too numerous instances of illiterateness and wild fanaticism have contributed to the effect. And it is partly owing to the wide rebellion of mind against mere institution. At any rate the superstition will wholly go, in spite of all the

pomps, ceremonies, and all sorts of canonicals. Any little popish relics retained by the Dissenters will be of no use—their ordinations with imposition of hands, their black dresses, &c. But we shall not need to care what becomes of the ecclesiastical character, as a thing of rank and institution, if the preachers make themselves individually respected and valuable. And this they *may* do, in a very high degree. They *will*, if solemnly in earnest for the cause of God, and the welfare of men. They *will*, if they evince a clear, sound, well exercised judgment, seriously intent on the manifestation of truth to men's understanding and conscience, with a still enlarging knowledge. The preacher may have the testimony of the people's own minds, that they are receiving the most important communications from him; and this will have its effect. And if all the preacher's mental improvements go into Christian virtues, so that his thinking better is his being better, and that each point of knowledge gained is a seed—what will be the effect of *that*?

It is striking to consider how much our young friends will, in the course of their life, have to do with mankind in the most important concerns. They will be confronted to every sort of character;—will speak to all imaginable states of mind;—will preach to every age;—will accompany as teachers, some of their people to the end of life,—others to the middle,—others through the introductory period. It is a serious consideration also, how much is depending *mediately* (in the way of second causes) on the spirit, the ability, the manner, in which they shall fulfil their vocation. Our steadfast profound conviction is, that it is the *Divine* energy only that can make the Christian ministry efficacious. But, it can never follow, that indolence shall have the same effect as diligence,—meagreness of mind as a richness of religious thought—or indifference as zeal.

LECTURE LXV.

THE SUPERIOR OBLIGATIONS OF CHRISTIANS.

MATTHEW v. 47.

“What do ye more than others?”

THE unhappy difference existing in the world, of good and bad, better and worse, affords, however, one advantage;—the distinction may be turned to the use of exemplification, reproof, and exhortation. All arguments from comparison and contrast would be, of course, precluded by a universal sameness or similarity; there would be no trial and manifestation by opposites. As the case is, one class may, as in the text, be convicted, or shamed, or stimulated by a reference to another; so that good may be gained from what has no good.

But, in attempting to make some practical use of the question, what classes are we to consider as placed in comparison? Our Lord is addressing such as may be supposed to be aspiring to high excellence; or, at least, were under a special requirement to do so. (*“Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect.”*) Doubtless, the requirement extends to all, in a general view of obligation. The law is all-comprehensive;—there are no degrees in the principle of duty, for that would be different laws. One Divine Law is equally peremptory to all. But yet, there may be a portion or class of society more specially standing forth as under high obligation, by their profession, or position, or both;—or by a more immediate form of summons; they may be liable to a more direct appeal,—a more pointed censure if

they fail. They, therefore, may fairly be challenged with the question in the text. And, who should they be, but those who expressly avow themselves the servants of God, for the cause of religion, and for doing good to men? Now, while they, like all men, are amenable to the one sovereign Law, they bring themselves under an additional accountability on the ground of comparison, by their own voluntary profession of not being like certain others. But, comparison with whom? Not, certainly, with the worst of mankind; they are not allowed to plead that they "*do more*" than those who do very little that they ought to do,—that they avoid gross delinquency,—preserve a decorum of conduct—and render to men what is due according to the ordinary rules of society. *That* is the ground of self-complacent comparison taken by a class much above the lowest,—by those who bear an unexceptionable character,—respectable,—trust-worthy,—attentive to the duties of their station,—such as no one would think of reproaching,—even paying some decorous attention to the observances of religion,—all this we mean, in a decent degree—persons who are up to the world's moral standard, and apt to make self-complacent comparisons with others. Now, it is with this portion of society, even the more respectable part of it, that the professedly devoted servants of God may be challenged into comparison, in the terms of the text, "*What do ye more than others?*"

And, it may be said to them, you must not complain that more is expected. It is of your own choice that you take a higher ground by your profession; by it, you avow principles and purposes greatly above the generality. You say, you dare not abide with them; that Christ, whose disciples and subjects you profess to be, would have no actual kingdom on earth, that his religion would be of very secondary use in the world unless there were those who regulated

their conduct by a higher standard; you see and say that *they* are seriously, fatally, deficient; you would not consent to take your final lot with them.

But, somewhat more particularly. As the professed servants of God are supposed to be observing the characters of men, and forming a judgment of them, for the purpose, partly, of judging of themselves, we may specify some things they will see, (characteristics,) which may serve for points of admonitory comparison.

They will observe, for instance, a faint and very limited sense of responsibility. Those they are looking on have not a clear, abiding apprehension of the grand business and object of life, and of existence itself, enforcing on them what they have to do; they are not impressively reminded, and kept in mind, that there is a Sovereign Master; are not under a habitual compelling sense of duty, consciously warned continually that they must give an account; they go on by habit; this is the case with many who are by no means of ill repute for immorality, and positive irreligion. Now, then, the text, "*What do ye more than others?*" Do you show a striking difference—a contrast? Is the tenor of your life (internal and external) set, and aimed, and prosecuted to answer an assigned purpose, and the highest? and all under authoritative orders; here, and here again, is a Law for me, and a Lawgiver, and a Judge. It is in a serious acknowledgment of my accountableness that I do this—or that. If my spirit would run loose, it is imperatively summoned back.

Again; in looking on mankind, (even those not profligate or expressly irreligious,) the servants of God will observe the lamentably small effect of admitted truth—acknowledged conviction. There is a ready assent to many truths, involving rules of duty and the very highest interests. Well,

that is admitted, what is to follow? Those truths are for something beyond their bare selves; unless something follow they are roots not sprouting. *Nothing* follows! The truths have no grapple. Now then, *you*? An important truth admitted by the judgment; does it seize hold, and keep hold, of the other faculties? Does it assume the character of a speaking oracle, and seem to say to the soul, and within the soul,—“Here I am, and I will not be dislodged, and I will not be trifled with; I will not be treated as if I had no business here; I will not be put off with *words*. As to your saying, ‘*I assent,—it is so;*’ why, an evil spirit would say as much! Nor will I sleep here; I am not *made* for sleep; nor will I let you sleep, in careless contempt of my presence.”

But figures put aside, it is to be expected from the servants of God, that far more should follow from admissions and convictions, than does follow in “*others*.” They see it in others a fearful, a tragical putting asunder of what God has united.

The required comparison will bring in view a numerous portion of society, (very far from the worst,) who yet are destitute of generous, enlarged, beneficent sympathies; their souls are of a quality not expansive and pervasive! they have no central fire to propel any generous emanations; they have formed around them (or, rather, let it be formed like northern ice) their little concentrated sphere of interest which confines and absorbs; so that their feelings, their concern, never reach or approach many interests which ought not to be wholly foreign. We are not to be extravagant on this matter, nor talk in the language of that wild fantasy of “*Universal Benevolence*,” as once uttered by Godwin and others; no spirit dwelling in flesh could ever expand its feelings to a world,—none but ONE. But, there

is no need to disclaim any extravagant imagination to warrant our employing condemnatory terms in describing the character in question.

There is the just charge, on those with whom our Lord's disciples are to compare themselves, of a deficient sensibility to the evils which afflict mankind, so numerous, various, continual, and of such dreadful amount. If thoughtfully contemplated, these evils are enough to suppress exuberant gaiety,—to bring a cloud,—to inspire a pensive feeling,—to excite a frequent, pathetic appeal to Heaven—to darken the moral atmosphere of the world. True, their constant, inveterate prevalence, and the inadequacy of all human power to remedy, inevitably have an effect to deaden sensibility. Still, it consists not with the Christian spirit, to be easy at such a view,—to regard it just as a thing of course;—“The world was to abound in misery, and 'tis of no use thinking about it. If we could, by a wish, make it otherwise, we would; but why should it interrupt our pleasures? We are glad if we escape; as to the vast unhappy multitude, Providence may look to them. There is as much wickedness as suffering, and the one deserves the other.” But, *“what do ye more than others?”* Do you deplore, compassionate, pray?

So much for the generous, expansive, Christian feeling; but, then, as to the practical application. We look around on men, and observe what good things they do not that they might. We fix on individuals, and, in thought, interrogate and arraign them. “Do you not see a most valuable thing you could do? Why, it is just before you, and you are just the proper man. Do you think what your activity, your interference, might or would do. Think what your money would, evidently, do. Mischiefs might be prevented, a wrong might be redressed,—a most opportune assistance might be given,—some person in

distress, or alarm, or difficulty, might be made to rejoice, and be grateful, perhaps to God. How *can* you hold back? Can you look at the case—the good thing that you might do, and let it go by for ever?” So we say in one instance, and another; but, then, “*What do ye more than others?*”

In prolonging this kind of observation on others, we express our wonder that they can so easily content themselves in *not* having done—not this good—not that good,—yet feel self-complacency; their *no-good* does not haunt them as a grievance. Or it may not be quite a negation—not *no-good*; often some small matter, and then they feel the utmost self-satisfaction, for producing which, perhaps, one instance may suffice. There is no consideration of what the state of things would be if none did more, and no disturbance at the admonition, “*He that soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly.*”

Or, sometimes they are content to *talk* for good things, and no more. Here it is to be noted, that in some cases, in many, to talk well *is* the service required. But often, this is not enough, nor the chief thing required; and then, the talking to the purpose becomes but a self-reproach. Now, “*what do ye more than others?*”

Of such a disposition of mind some of the circumstances attendant or consequent are sufficiently obvious. One is, that such persons will not do good at any considerable cost to self-indulgence. “I will be just as I could desire for myself, separately from all such considerations.” We may name luxury (without the invidiousness of pointed particularity);—unrestricted expenditure in the mode of living;—what is mainly for show or display;—to glitter in elegance or pomp;—even the indulgence of fine taste, in a respectable sense of the phrase.

Such persons will not forego their ease,—they shrink from great personal exertion. Where is the reason or right

to tax *me* for this labour, or this? they have a reverential awe of the weather, the clouds;—there is something quite formidable to them in a certain quantity of rain-drops; they feel a recoiling at the offensive circumstances attending poverty and misery.

Again, there will be much calculation for *self* in what good *is* done by such persons. There may, indeed, be a little (or *not* a little) self-righteousness in the case; but a regard to self is shown in other forms,—“How will my interest be served? will it gain for me a good opinion which I can turn to account? Or, what measure of applause shall I obtain?” And there will be disposition to choose the modes and occasions most likely to gain it—“*to be seen of men.*” Sparing and reluctant will be the exertions or sacrifices when no temporal remuneration of any kind can be looked for; when it is only that conscience—only that God—will approve.

Such persons, again, will never be the first or among the foremost, in good services to God or man: they would feel, great quiet in not hearing that anybody is doing anything out of the ordinary course,—would be pleased if it was found to be less than was reported. And when something is proposed or attempted, they are very slow to see any reason or necessity for it,—any prudence,—any probability; and it is not till after one and another (neighbours, or, persons whom they have often to meet, or, whose high character carries a kind of enforcing authority) have countenanced it, that they partially accede, and then to avoid disrepute; and still with caution not to do a good thing in such a manner as to involve a pledge for more, for a continuance; there is a careful retention of the privilege, “*to do as I like.*”

We may add one thing,—that persons of not decidedly Christian spirit will be much indisposed to any order of

action which would go to take them out of friendship with the world. They will not do *that* "*more than others*"—*that* which would subject them to the imputation of what the world means by the phrase of "*righteous overmuch*"—which would mark them as "*saints*"—"enthusiasts"—"*fanatics*"—what would be in contrariety to current notions—to easy morality—to frivolous amusements,—would unfit them to be quite at home with mere men of the world. In these times, indeed, there *is* a broader middle region. Still there are things, not compatible with the friendship of the world, but obligatory on the avowed servants of Christ. And the text asks them "*what,*"—how much,—of *these* things they do "*more than others.*" For example—devotional habits,—high conscientiousness,—earnest care of their own salvation,—labours for that of others,—protest against sin,—genuine zeal to advance the kingdom of Christ. Men must not take on them this character, and expect to sustain it at a low rate. They are to consider well what is the extent of the pledge. And the test of the Christian character will be, what obligations are recognized, and endeavoured to be practically fulfilled.

Now, this being the state of the case, there would be many considerations to the effect of enforcement, admonition, and discrimination. We may suggest a few.

One is, to beware of the sad tendency there is to the *less*, in every good thing, instead of the "*more.*" What cause have even good men to be indignant, incensed, at their corrupt nature! The tendency obstinately is to wish the exaction were lighter,—to be ingenious in making out points of exemption,—to plead, not only the weakness of our nature, but even its very depravity,—to make a perverted use of the doctrine of Divine assistance;—the truth that we are nothing of ourselves, but that all is by the help of God, alleged so as, virtually, to say, we do little because

God does not enable us to do more, thus making it his fault ! The tendency is to magnify the little we do,—to take credit for what we intend to do,—to say, we do more than some who profess as much.

Reverting to the disposition there is to contract the sphere of Christian obligation and action, let us recommend a consideration of the extent of what there is to be done. What may strictly be called a man's personal concern is a momentous affair ; but even this may suggest to him to look abroad,—to mind not his own things exclusively, but also the things of others. And look any way, every way round, his notice soon falls on something that should not be so,—should then be altered, if it can ; while it *is* so, there is mischief,—error,—depravity,—suffering ; there is something that needs to be supplied,—changed,—abolished, created. There is the poison-tree that needs to be extirpated, and the tree of life planted ; there is the dark recess, where the heavenly lamp wants to be lighted. To think, what work is to be done in coming times !—there is quite enough for every individual's share. And let not the Christian agent plead off on the ground that, on so vast a field, any diminutive share that he can effect is just as nothing. The argument would come to this, that the more there is to be done, by the action of many individuals, the more excuse there is for each individual to do nothing. The truth is, this poor diminutive agent is not reconciled to his own dimensions ; he says he is *little*,—yet is not willing to act unless he could do something to figure himself forth as *great*.

At the view of the immensity of things wanting to be done, there will sometimes arise a religious idea, tending, unless guarded, to an irreligious feeling—"God could do it all with perfect facility, why does he not ?"—with somewhat of an unsubmissive and remonstrant sentiment. The plain sole answer is, "We don't know why—it is a

profound mystery." But *as* plain it is that he commands his servants to work diligently, zealously,—and in faith that their "*labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.*" And they are to look on "*others,*" for the purpose of gaining more definiteness to the conception and laws of their own vocation—"that standard is not for me,"—"that plan, those habits of life will not suit my work"—"that self-indulgent indolence, what will my Master say?"—"that conformity to the world,—in what company shall I be found at last?"

Consider, where should we have been, (according to the ordinary instrumentality employed in the Divine government,) if there had not been, in every age, persons to "*do more,*" much more, "*than others?*" men to rise up in superiority and opposition to the general state of the world?—men to labour for God and a good cause with indefatigable resolution at all costs and hazards? if there had not been Wicliffs, Luthers, Knoxes,—in a later age, Whitefields and Wesleys? virtuous revolutionists and reformers in all departments? movers and executors of beneficent schemes? On a more limited and local scale, in many districts and neighbourhoods, the good people have to tell us how some worthy and zealous man came thither, or came forward there, and was opposed, but persevered, gained co-operators, &c. Let us imagine, if we can, struck out of history, general or local, all that such men did, and caused to be done, "*more than others.*" It would give the idea of a world not worth keeping in existence.

Consider, again, how we talk of imitating excellent examples. But how are there to be any such? To recommend example, always supposes something superior, in its department, to the actual condition of those who are to imitate; also, something marked, conspicuous, distinguishable from the rest of the class. It would be a

mortifying reply from the persons so exhorted—"Imitate! Why, we don't see the superior excellence; they may as well imitate us as we them." Who would direct a man inquiring the way through a country—"Notice a high ground,—a lofty spire,—a remarkable tree;" if he might answer, "I *see* no hill, or spire, or remarkable tree?"

Observe, too, that the instant an example is set forth, the persons charged to imitate it, will be critical and sharp in examining its claims to be one; if they can find flaws they will; for it is no pleasant thing to be told that another is their superior; and if they are to imitate, they will be glad to do it on the easiest terms, and therefore, to reduce the example as much as possible.

There may here be suggested an admonition to those who really do, in the right spirit, aspire to excel, to "*do more than others*"—not to be discouraged and deterred by the disposition that will show itself to depreciate, carp, misrepresent, and even obstruct. This has been the experience of all who have acted in the spirit of the high vocation. A deplorable characteristic of human nature! as if grieved that the race should not be wholly fallen! displeased at the proofs of its being capable of being a little lifted up from the degraded level.

But, now, the appeal is to those who are truly intent on compliance with the text. You encounter all this;—did you reckon on the contrary? You are aggrieved by opposition,—imputations,—cavils,—misrepresentation,—ridicule,—satire. Now, suppose you surrendered your high purposes, and then received the tokens of a contrary feeling. One, and another, shall say,—“Well, I am glad you have given up your notion of being so much better than your neighbours; that you see no good in setting up for a Pharisee!” Another,—“Now we have you again! I *hoped* you would be cured, after a while, of the wild fancies,

that made you talk and act in that sort of fanatical way. You now see, rightly, that while we are in the world, we must do as the world does." Another,—“It’s well for you that you are become prudent. I like all good things, in soberness and moderation; but on your plan, you would have been aiming at a great deal that was needless, or ill-timed, or impracticable. You would have had people disliking and opposing you,—and *little thanks* from any quarter.”

The question is,—To those who are apt to be discouraged and deterred from “*doing more than others*,” would this be a gratifying sort of approbation and congratulation? We used the expression “*little thanks*.” This will sometimes be experienced; and there is need of great effort against its chilling and repressive influence. We must do the good thing for its own sake, or God’s sake, not on any understood stipulation for a grateful return.

It is another consideration, requiring the most genuine motive, and the firmest resolution, for “*doing more than others*,” that the obligation is enforced, and partly created, by the very fact that others do not what they ought; in compensation for their deficiency; their neglected, or refused share, is laid on those who will do the work; so that it is very much in proportion as others do *less*, that they have to do “*more*.” If the others would come and take the shares that belong to them out of the hands of the faithful and overburdened workmen, it would be a relief, not as to the *quantity* alone, but the facility—but, they will not. They will not! and the bond-servants of God, who may be said in an honourable sense to be chained to their labour, look at them with regret, and sometimes with indignation. “That one has a degree of weight and influence in society, but he will not ‘*do more than others*.’”

“That other has time on his hands, but he will rather

trifle it away." "That other has talent, but he will exert it only to please or profit himself." "That other, again, has *money* in plenty, and accumulating. There are, within his view or knowledge, all forms of distress that might be relieved by it—but he is enclosed in the warmth of his prosperity, and does not care. There is one excellent design, and another, labouring in difficulty, perhaps from deficiency of that article; he could tell it out in sovereigns or notes, any day, and often, and not be *sensibly* the poorer;—but no! Or if, for decorum's sake, he suffer a little to escape him, it will be no more than is expected from persons of far inferior means." Now, those who are under the compulsion of the text, are apt to murmur,—“Why are we made to make up for all these;—to work, as it were, for them?” The answer is, This is a wrong view; you are not working for them, but for God. It is the Great Master's business; and would *you* not do it to the utmost of your power, because they will not do it at all?

In all this affair, of comparison with others, there is need to be warned respecting the principle, the motive, that is to impel to exceed them; and also, respecting equity in the manner of making the comparison. It is a treacherous and unhappy circumstance of our nature, that there may be wrong motives to a right thing. It is eminently so in this matter of excelling others in good works;—such motives as vanity,—pride,—self-righteousness,—self-idolatry. The servants of Christ, then, in conforming to their Lord's requirement, are to beware of seeking to be admired, and praised, and set off in invidious comparison,—treated with great deference, &c. They are to beware of doing good in a jealous competition for distinction and honour;—of choosing with a special preference, and from a motive of vanity, those ways of doing good which confer the most notoriety, when there are much more obscure courses, less sounding

operations, with no trumpet to proclaim them. There are some who, because they cannot do anything conspicuous, will do nothing.

When the corrupt motive turns to the religious side, when, after looking toward men, it looks toward God—there is self-righteousness—the Pharisee's catalogue (much improved upon) to be presented to the Almighty. "All thanks to Christ,—but we *will* have some merit of our own." And for this purpose of self-merit a very high value is easily set on very moderate performances. This notion of self-merit is a most besetting nuisance; it comes in like water, at every crevice. But how to avoid it? In the case put to Mr. Hall, ("You know, sir, self-righteousness is a great evil—a great sin." "Certainly; what of that?" &c.) the poor man had two evils to contest with—covetousness and self-righteousness, playing into each other's hands; and saw no escape from between them, but by a quiet surrender to one of them. He should have been told to fall fiercely on his covetousness, in the first place, for it was *that*, that supplied such hugely magnified pretensions to his self-righteousness; this would have greatly reduced the strength of the latter foe. Or he should have been told, finally, that if the case was to be left so, he must resign his profession of Christianity.

But, looking to this concern of motives,—what a grievous reflection it is,—what a melancholy view of our nature, that it is so difficult for it to be brought to the right action at all; and then, so difficult to maintain the prevalence of the right motives. Oh! what a power of Divine Grace it does require! and also, what need to keep habitually in sight, the sublime standard of Perfection, to humble the estimate of all human excellence!

Just a word on equity in making the comparison, and we close.

“*More than others.*” Let there be a jealous watchfulness on the propensity to magnify *ours*, and to diminish *theirs*, in the comparison, according to the optical principle, that the one is close at hand, the other distant.

Again, the “*others*,” with whom the comparison is made, may have more difficulties than we are aware of, so that it may cost them more in exertion and sacrifice. Besides, they may do more good things than we know of.

Those of much larger means are not to consider themselves as doing “*more than others*,” unless they do more according to that proportion. There is heavy complaint on this matter in some religious connections.

Another failure of equity is, when a man compares (if we so may express it) his *most* against an other’s *least*. “I perform, in this particular service, so much ; there is that other, he does little, if anything, in this way.” It may be so ; but may be, also, that, in another way, equally worthy and valuable, he performs much, while, in *that* way, you do little ; and it may be beyond his ability to do both.

I would pointedly notice one, I believe, very common failure of equity in the comparative estimate of services ; I mean, the estimate set on tribute to a good cause in money, by those who can well afford it, as compared to what persons who cannot afford it, render in labour and valuable time. One has known persons (there are many such) not able to take any high rank in a list of subscriptions, but who have toiled patiently, and indefatigably, and gratuitously, month after month, and year after year, in various modes of exertion, to do good ; and yet, in the view of unthinking persons, this has stood for far less than a handsome donation of money. Not, assuredly, that we are depreciating pecuniary aids ; but our subject has turned on comparisons, and we plead for justice in the manner of making them.

To conclude ; let us seriously lay to heart the condition

under which our Lord has placed his servants, amidst the inhabitants of this earth. He himself, when on earth, did "*more*" than all the other inhabitants, beyond all terms and measures of comparison. When he ceased to be visibly present, his cause, his work, his affairs, devolved on the agency of such as should be willing to take on them the the highest vocation under the sun. That vocation is disclaimed, practically, by an awful proportion of the world's inhabitants. They, therefore, who assume it, are pledged (sworn) to do what the others will not. And let them consider how the time, the season, hastens away. Opportunities come, and are gone! it is a pensive, a mournful contemplation, to imagine the feelings of a man, late in life, looking back with profound regret. With what force, then, may the admonition be pressed on those in early life, to consider, deliberately, in what way and degree, *different* from a multitude of those around them, they will wish to have been.

Let the faithful maintainers of the distinction prescribed by their Lord, look to the sublime reward,—"*Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*"

LECTURE LXVI.

INEFFICACIOUS CONVICTIONS.

ROMANS vii. 18.

“ To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not.”

It is no part of our present design to examine the doctrine running through this and the connected chapters; nor even to ascertain under what precise relation the words of the text were spoken. It may be true that the apostle was personating a man, and describing the state and feelings of a man, under the bondage of the Jewish law, as contradistinguished to the freedom of the gospel. It can, however, be no less true, that he might and would have uttered these very words concerning himself, in a certain degree of their most obvious direct meaning.

But it must have been a distressing consciousness, a humiliating confession, in whatever degree he had to make it. How much he wished the case to be otherwise! Adam did not more fervently wish it possible to go back into Paradise and innocence.

But, we have sometimes heard confessions, in something like the same terms, made in a very different spirit. Confessions that certainly there is something very wrong with us; that the mind *is* much out of order for the most important concerns and the highest duties; that it is very unfortunate it should be so; but, then, there is no helping

it; we are as God made us; it is the common condition of mankind. And there is an easily returning indifference about it, just as if not thinking about it were as good as a remedy for it; just as if an evil ceased to be an evil in proportion to its desperate strength.

Now, it would be possible to think of modes of admonition fit to be addressed to persons even in a state of mind like this. There is something or other to be said to man, as long as he has reason. But at present it is a very different state of mind that we have in view, as the subject of some serious considerations. Let us describe it. You will acknowledge it to be no imaginary picture, as thus:—a clear apprehension, and constant conviction of the judgment, as to the importance of certain great concerns, and a necessity of a serious attention to them,—both the grand general concern of religion, and certain special concerns, part of the comprehensive one,—certain important duties and interests. An earnest desire, often felt, and always approved, that these great concerns were duly attended to. But,—but, still, they are not! that is to say, in any such manner as it is felt they ought. Many years since they were not duly attended to; last year they were not; they are not now. Some fatal prevention lies heavy on the active powers, like the incubus in a dream. Again, and again, without end, the monitory, the reproachful conviction returns upon the man; and he wishes, and resolves, and, perhaps, attempts. Sometimes thinks, “Surely now it is going to be!” But, still, nothing is done! He almost execrates his own perverse nature, and the world in which he is placed. “I am under the curse of being quite another creature than I should have been,—I am a thing that wants to be dissolved, and made again.” He wishes some mighty force might come upon him,—that an iron hand would drag him from his position, unfix him from

where he stands like Lot's wife. He would be almost willing, at some times, to be terrified by awful signs, portentous phenomena. "I am willing that the ground should tremble under my feet; that the spirits of the Dead should haunt and accost me,—nay, almost, that the Devil himself should glare upon me. It were better I should sometimes see him with his terrors now, than continually hereafter. But, vain fancies and wishes! all remains unmoved. Nature is quiet. Spirits of the Dead do not encounter me! The grand Enemy has *other* modes of being near me! and, alas! *I* remain unmoved! And yet, all this while, there is no essential impossibility in what I am wanting and desiring. Here is my soul with all the powers and faculties. The whole matter is but, that these should be actuated aright. '*O wretched man that I am,*' under the weight of '*the body of this death!*'"

How comes so deplorable a condition of a being "*made a little lower than the angels?*" It comes of the disorder, and ruination of our nature. What is the disorder, the ruination of anything, but its being reduced to a state that frustrates the purpose of its existence, be it a machine, a building, or an animal? Then look here, at the state of mind we are describing! A man that feels, as he ought, this state,—oh! what contempt he must needs entertain for any theory that *denies* this ruination! unless he is to regard himself as a peculiar case, and no specimen. "Here, in a moral sense," he may say, "here are wheels that will not turn,—springs without elasticity,—levers that break in the application of their force; and you tell me there is no radical fault in the state of the machinery!" "One thing is clear, that I can never learn from instructors like you how to have the miserable disorder rectified. You know too little about mankind,—about yourselves,—about the great standard."

But, to proceed to our main purpose. A man conscious of, and lamenting such a state of mind,—*What shall he do?* Absolve himself from all duty respecting it? Leave it as it is, without an exertion? Soothe himself into a stupid contentment? Resign himself to despair? Infallibly the time must come when he will feel that this was not the way. No; he has a solemn work to do, and he must think of means. But here, perhaps, some one puts the question, “What class, precisely, are you addressing,—saints or sinners,—the converted or unconverted?” Our answer is, we are addressing no class, but those that the description fits, and in whatever degree it fits. We do all honour to the Divine work of conversion, by acknowledging that it introduces a new and quite foreign principle into the mind! that it is the *germ of a new nature*, constituting there a spiritual vitality. But then, (in a multitude of cases at least,) how very partial is its prevalence! So that, to a lamentable degree, the state of disorder remains. Have you not had a sense of extreme absurdity, in hearing or reading some religious teachers, representing two classes as complete antipodes, without regard to discrimination and *degrees*? Let a carnal, unconverted man be described, and the character consists of the whole account of human depravity. But let them describe a converted man, and there is just the entire reverse. But where is the man that will dare to produce himself as this complete reverse? Indeed, is there, according to such a description, a converted man on earth? We may appeal to the experience and conscience of many of those who hope and believe they are the subjects of Divine grace. Some of the points of this appeal, conformably to the previous description, would be,—Have they not often to lament a hateful coldness toward Divine objects,—a slowness to duty,—criminal delay,—strong opposing principles and impulses? Then, let them not act the Pharisee;

but be willing to stand on the general ground with their fellow sinners, to meet the appropriate admonitions. There is one good thing, at the least, in all those fellow sinners, whose condition we are contemplating,—that they are deeply dissatisfied with that condition. It is *so* that conversion must begin, and we will hope that in many cases, it *is* that beginning. To them we would say, Cherish this dissatisfaction—this grief; *be thankful that you are unhappy*. But then, apply yourselves with all diligence to obtain a remedy. But, in what way? Look at the evil in view—the inefficacy of conviction—this practical refusal of the mind to be constrained. Its general cause and its strength are, the prevalence of the depravity of our nature. The adequate remedy must be no less comprehensive and fundamental; and this is to be earnestly sought.

But to take a more special view of the case;—the immediate cause of this inefficacy—this incompetency of our convictions and our best wishes and resolutions, is that the *motives* are not strong enough. It is obvious as daylight, but yet to be strongly insisted on, that it is by motives the mind must be actuated. To talk of free-will, in the most absolute sense, would be the grossest of all absurdities—a mere self-impulse. Hence, the importance of our being placed under the power of right motives and strong ones. And hence, then, the importance of *seeking* to have them. “But then we must, to begin with, have a motive to that.” The answer is, We want to be under a constant, mighty, driving power of good motives. And, at every moment, there *are* those things existing which *should* be all the motives we want; or should be their soul and strength. This may be the reflection of the man who feels as if half turned into stone,—“There is, all this while, what should put me all into life and action.” As sometimes a man, in a long continued bodily malady, thinks—nay, not

only so, but in this mental atrophy, the man can see *what* would,—“Now that is the proper motive to such a good thing, and that to such another; and there, again, are what should be the motives equally to all good things. Oh now, if these considerations were acting mightily upon me,—this and that,—ten times more strongly,—a hundred times more strongly.—And if they *all* together did! that would do!! And they should—they deserve—yet they *do* not. Oh *why* do they not? Let them! Spirit of God, make them!” When a mariner suffers a long, dead calm on the ocean, how oft he looks up to the sails, and says, “Oh, if the winds would but blow!” Now, there may be persons who will aver, that the thoughtful man can do no more respecting his motives than the mariner respecting the winds. We must think differently; and wish to inquire what practicable means he may find for strengthening the operation of good motives upon his mind. We are always supposing him honestly, and even earnestly, desirous of this effect. Then, what means do really lie within the reach and rational exercise of his power? Or shall he wait quietly to see whether the good motives will grow stronger of themselves? As we may look at a stream, and know that when the rain comes, it will be swollen to a torrent; as we may let trees alone, and see how they will enlarge. Alas! have his good motives grown while he *has* thus waited? How many springs have gone by, while the trees have grown larger and stronger! To the means, then! And, the sovereign expedient for all good purposes, and especially those regarding the highest interest, is to implore the application of Divine power. This is not to be lost sight of a moment. But this, as most important, may be placed last. And, first of all, the whole matter is quite hopeless, unless we can effectually resolve to exercise serious, frequent, patient *thought*. Thought is the sole medium

through which motives can come in contact with the mind, whencesoever they may come,—as light is required for objects to come to the eye. We must deeply think what it is that all the great motives are required for. *What* in us,—for us, by us? How, in time past, the failure has been. In what manner the mind has frustrated the force of the considerations that should have compelled it. And what would render them effectual. The probable and certain consequences of the continued inefficacy of our convictions. The solemn duty of looking about the means. Oh, the perverseness of evading such subjects of reflection! Oh, the folly of letting such a concern alone! This serious thinking will tend, (and it is one great purpose and use of it,) to render luminously distinct and prominent in our view, those grand considerations which ought to constitute our chief motives. Then, next, these being decidedly marked out and acknowledged, it should be our study and systematic endeavour to aggravate the force of those considerations, in all ways. “There is something that needs to be reinforced. It should be so to-day.” We should watch for anything to be added to their power,—seize on everything that can be thrown into the scale, any reflection, emotion, instruction, impression, that is applicable. Say, “This belongs here, to the general motives which should govern me, or to this particular one.” It should be a study to apply and appropriate these applicable things to this important use.

Observe here, how this does take place, without any such care and voluntary effort, in the case of a motive which falls in with our natural inclination. The motive then of itself, as by an instinct for its good, catches all these things that serve to strengthen it. If a man could compare the force of it at two distinct periods, he might wonder, how it had grown so much, since he never took any pains it should.

Without our care it avails itself of each casual thought,—each passing impression; like a wild animal of the forest, that needs no formal provision.

Observe, too, among mankind, how fast, how dreadfully so, the very worst motives may grow upon a man, and he never intend it! Oh! not such the condition of the good ones!

But, besides this general vigilance to seize and apply anything that might offer itself, there must be a direct earnest study and effort to bring upon the mind the impressions most adapted. And how? Obviously, by an effort of serious thought to bring before the mind those subjects, those truths, those realities, which are adapted to make the right impressions;—to bring them as close to the mind as possible;—and with frequent and persevering repetition. And here we appeal to the man who laments in the language of the text, and say,—“Cannot you do *this*?”

And let us observe to him, further, that,—if he is sincere in his professions of grief and good desire, he will be willing to sustain a *painful* repetition of these applications. And if he feels at any time a strong impression made, so that the motive takes hold of him, oh let him be earnest that it may be retained and prolonged! There are moments when thoughts strike and fix,—when the aspects of solemn things are unveiled. It should be unnecessary to admonish him here, that he is to be anxious and careful to debar the influences that give force to the opposite motives. And, for what those are, let him consult his experience.

In connexion with this, it may be worth suggesting, that it will be well, by an exercise of thought, to endeavour, in any case to *combine* several motives,—all the motives—that work the same way, that tend to the same effect. There is one inducement applicable to the duty; but there is also another, and another. But take special care of admitting

an evil or doubtful principle into this combination—which does mischief in another way, though it do, in mere point of fact, assist to the good purpose in view; a possible case, and of which the corruption of the heart will not fail to take advantage. Revenge may work to the same point as pure justice; but here the companionship of the bad will vitiate the good; as if a well disposed person were to go even to a place of religious worship in amicable companionship with a very depraved and malignant one.

The idea of combining good motives, leads to a further and important point, namely—that each good motive must, to be of any essential value, be part of a whole, general system of such motives. There must be a vital circulation of the holy principles through the whole soul. The single part cannot by itself have pulsation, and warmth, and life. The one actuating principle will be surrounded by a multitude of others; and if it be a holy one, and they are hostile, it will soon be overwhelmed by them, and perish. “*What hast thou to do here?*” It must be supported by its like, on the right hand and the left, or it will infallibly be cut down.

Let it be added, that our concern respecting the influence of motives upon us, is to be directed to this indispensable point—that the highest, the noblest, may have the chief power over us;—the love of God, the love of Christ, the regard to Eternity,—the desire of Heaven. In other words, our grand business respecting motives, is, the earnest cultivation of general, vital religion. This alone can put them in that system and general combination we spoke of. This alone can put Conscience into them, in the strict sense of the word. This alone can make them look solemnly to hereafter, and short of this, how worthless are they! And that such sublime considerations may command us, may be our predominant motives, shall we not account worthy of

all earnestness,—all prayer,—all practicable discipline? And shall we not be glad and thankful that there is a practicable discipline, under the Divine agency and help? It is a bad sign when this is depreciated.

One of the expedients in this our self-discipline (for reinforcing our languid motives) will be, to dwell often on the most instructive and impressive examples. And also, there are many affecting scenes and events applicable to the principles that should move us; (the death of friends,—dreadful deaths, &c.)

Another obvious suggestion is, to choose, as far as lies within our choice, the society which furnishes the best incitements. And, then, as to influential circumstances generally. We are in a strange degree the creatures of circumstances; sadly so; because the greater proportion of them, by far, have a bad influence upon us. But, therefore, we should feel the more solicitude about this. In some cases, we can choose them. When it is so, let the consideration be, “What will probably be the influence on my actuating principles, as I choose thus, or so?” As to those respecting which we can have no choice, let us be intent upon deriving the utmost benefit from what is favourable in them; thus counteracting the influence of the unfavourable ones, and extracting good even from them. It is happy for some men that a beneficial force and impulse is put upon them by their connection and occupation. (Methodist connection.) In all such affairs we shall do well to pay attention to the natural constitution of our minds. A man who will observe, can perceive in what special and peculiar manner certain circumstances have an influence on him,—what it is that most tends to repress his better purposes. While touching on this topic we may just notice one kind of mental character, which is indeed less liable than others to be “moved” to evil, but on which it is difficult for the

good motives to be brought to act with power;—we mean the mind of a natural disposition cold, heavy, still, insensible. Motives work best, so to speak, in fire, that is, in the warmth and animation of the passions. Where these are faint, so will be the actuating principles. Therefore, an important admonition to persons partaking of such a natural state of mind is this,—where there is so little fire of the soul, let it not be wasted on trifling things; but applied and consecrated, as much as possible, to give efficacy to the best principles. When there are barely combustibles enough for offering a sacrifice, it were sacrilege to take them away for baubles and amusements.

But do we talk of sacred fire? There is fire enough in heaven for all our noblest uses! And it can be had thence! There are means of drawing it down. We want it as much as Elijah, when his altar and offering were all drenched in water. God has put into our hands that which will bring it down. And we must not close this subject without emphatically insisting, again, on the necessity of our using the greatest and mightiest of all means,—supplication to the Almighty. Our doing so or not, is the very test of our sincerity in the whole concern. It can be no “*godly sorrow*” that we are professing, if it does not direct and impel us to God for help. We believe that the Almighty looks mercifully on the serious emotions of the soul;—that he can impart to them any degree of power, compatible with the state of mortality. And he has promised the Divine energy of his Holy Spirit to those that ask him. Then what have we to say to him? “Oh! infuse into these convictions, these motives—thine own Omnipotence! Here is a solemn consideration that glimmers in my mind—make it lighten!—Here are the motives which thou hast sent; they come near me,—come round me,—but seem not to touch me;—there is surely something between;—oh! make

them break in upon me, though it were as a storm! Here is a languid, unavailing strife, of the better principles against an overpowering force. Oh! arm those principles with all that there is in heaven that belongs to them, and then my deadly oppressors will be driven away! Here is a wretched, corrupted nature, averse to thee and all that is good. Oh! lay thy hand upon it, thy new-creating hand—and it will be for ever thine! Here are means, which I am endeavouring to use—oh let me not labour in self-dependance—nor labour in vain!”

We conclude by but repeating, how evident it is, at every step, that there *must* be, for this concern, a habit of serious thought, or all is in vain. It might have been made, as it were, a distinct lesson on each particular that has been suggested—“This *can* be of no use, unless you will exercise consideration upon it.” It is—it *is* a hard task to think gravely, and for a considerable continuance, and a frequent repetition; especially on subjects involving pain. But any degree of thought may suffice to show that such thinking is indispensable, in the concern we have been representing.

LECTURE LXVII.

DOUBLE-MINDEDNESS.

JAMES i. 8.

"A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways."

THE short contribution of the apostle James to the collection of sacred Scriptures is exceedingly remarkable for the bold and prominent exposure of the principles of human nature, as brought out in its practical modes and aspects of exhibition. He gives us the impression of his intimately inspecting real men, by classes and individuals;—of his having, somewhat like Socrates, met them, arrested them, examined them, near and close,—and shaped his descriptions, lessons, lectures, and reproofs, on what was palpably before his sight. And as this was done under the fresh and penetrating light of Christianity, and with a severe application of its principles, the judgments incomparably exceed, in rectitude, in radical exposure, and in authority, all heathen wisdom.

He is remarkable for the grave force of single strokes of description and censure. Our text exhibits and condemns a character in a very few words, with a directness and clearness which leave no doubt that he had been actually looking at such a man. And we may observe that, at that time, in the commencing contest of Christianity with the whole world of evil, such an equivocal, undecided, half-and-half man, if he made any pretensions to be for the cause of Christ, must have appeared a sadly ill-constructed creature. Of all things on earth, he would not do for a Christian

For *that* character and service a very different man indeed was wanted. But not *now*, neither, will this double-minded man be of any value to himself, to men, or to God.

Let us see whether the character thus briefly described in the text, may not admit of some useful illustration. And we would attempt it in the following order. *First*; (though it may be questioned whether this should be the first in order,) two or three general observations to show what a disadvantageous, what an unhappy, state of mind it is. *Secondly*; a few particular exemplifications of it. *Thirdly*; a brief suggestion of the means of remedy.

First, we have to observe on the miserable disadvantage, inefficiency, and, we may say, worthlessness, of such a state of mind for anything great and good. "*Double-minded*," "*unstable in all*" things. The words instantly convey the idea of a man disabled in the exercise of his powers,—whose principles are undecided,—who has no steady aim,—whose purposes are confused,—whose efforts have not the consistency and perseverance to be availing. "*Unstable as water, he shall not excel.*" A man, "*between two opinions*," must "*halt*."

Now, connect this with the consideration of the feebleness of the human powers at the best. Let those powers be in their best order, and exerted in the most steady, constant, and consistent manner possible,—and even *then*,—how slow and toilsome is the progress to any good,—what a labour to overcome difficulties,—what unsuccessfulness and repetition of efforts,—how little, comparatively, accomplished, in acquiring any personal improvement,—in effecting any social good. The most vigorous agents have mourned and been mortified, to see how little they had done; the most determined servants of God have confessed that they were "*unprofitable servants*." Think of this, and then look at the man who expends his strength in frustrating his own

exertions,—whose purposes and efforts do little more than counteract one another.

Again, connect the idea of this character with that of the shortness of life ; short, in the most protracted instances,—shorter still, in the far greater number. And how much of this inevitably consumed in little cares and occupations ! and, in many instances, in grievances, pains, and languor ! So that it is quite alarming to think how little space there is for the best exertions for the most important objects. But then, what do we think of a state of the mind wholly unfit for any such exertions and purposes at all ? A man deliberating, devising, designing, and perplexing and confounding his designs,—and life is still hastening on ;—prosecuting a purpose a little while,—and then, hesitating, stopping,—life still going on ! abandoning his design,—returning on his steps,—life still going forward ;—attempting a different thing,—defeated again,—life still going ;—trying to combine several things which cannot coalesce,—the result a failure, yet life going on ;—for a while spiritless for everything,—life all the while passing away. Oh ! if he could but *see* time hastening away !

Think, again, what a dishonour and ignominy it is, for a man to be thus, as it were, his own opponent and frustrator. There is enough to oppose him,—to cross him, to obstruct him from *without*, were he ever so vigorously prepared for the great operations of duty. But he has *within* him the causes of defeat. He cannot put in order the active principles and powers within the citadel of his soul, to sally out in force against the external difficulties and opposition. He has there opinion dissenting from opinion,—motive disagreeing with motive,—passion conflicting with passion,—purpose thwarting purpose. A consciousness that he is powerless, and that if he attempt to act, he will accomplish nothing. It is justly that he has a sense of shame and self-

contempt; for, how dishonourable a state is this, for a being who is summoned to the service of God, and the labours for immortality,—that he is so occupied and exhausted in a wretched strife in his own self, while the mighty enterprise is presented before him,—while zealous saints are prosecuting their career, while the grand course of all nature is incessantly proceeding,—while angels are all fulfilling their sublime vocations!

But to carry the view outward; this double-minded man, who has no simplicity and unity of purpose,—think how unfortunate is his case, on account of the diversity and multiplicity of things there will be to distract his purposes and frustrate his exertions. In this “*double*” condition of mind, he is liable to be arrested by a great number of things on either side. He is put, as it were, in relation to more kinds of difficulty,—of doubt,—of temptation,—of delusion,—of apprehension. A man who has an unity of spirit and design, is soon aware what kind of things he has most to apprehend,—to beware of,—or to meet in opposition, and sees them straight before him. The man of divided spirit cannot know how much and variously he is exposed. He has, at the least, two men’s motives, dispositions, difficulties, and temptations! as if one man’s portion were not enough! He might look at two persons of very diverse dispositions and pursuits, and say, “Now I am *both you*, as to motives, desire of objects, and difficulties in the attainment of them, and, at the same time, I have not the single strength of either. Oh, that I *could* be the one or the other, and then I could prosecute a purpose, as each of you apart does. There is one class of objects presented to me,—attracts me,—commands me; but when I think I am devoting myself that way, I find that another class, or another object, has seized hold of this other, this left-handed part, of my nature, and is compelling me that way, and so I can go *no* way, but

in a short movement, soon to be drawn back." Now, think of such a being, in such a world as this! In such wavering,—in such instability of purpose and action, he is useless, for his own advantage,—of no value for the good of men, nor for the service of God. And what a miserable account will he have to make of his life at its conclusion!

II. In the next place, we should exemplify, a little more particularly. But we may previously observe, that there are very many men exempt from this miserable weakness, by being the subjects of something still worse. There is many a sinner that betrays no double-mindedness. He is actuated wholly, steadily, constantly, by some one predominant evil. The man of all-grasping ambition,—the complete sensualist,—the insane lover of money. And these, in their way, are most worthy to be held up as examples, to those who profess to be, or to wish to be, devoted to better things. "Look at them," we would say to the unstable, double-minded man, "*look at them, and be ashamed!*"

In representing the character of our text, in some of its most usual forms, we may note, that there is perhaps some difference between a double-mindedness of variableness, fluctuation, fickleness,—and that of inconsistency or self-contradiction. We have known persons of this former description, variable in principle and purpose,—and especially in regard to the greatest concern of all,—at one time, and for a while, in all appearance under the predominant power of most solemn convictions—seeming to feel the impressions of divinity and eternity—applying themselves to means and exercises of religion, lamenting their past neglect and irreligion—and uttering emphatic vows for the future. But, after a while,—perhaps no long interval,—all this would be gone! What malignant influence had smitten them? What evil spirit had taken it all away? or what

dreadful power of evil in their own spirits had awaked, after slumbering for a while?

But, again, after another interval, the same order of thoughts and feeling has returned, with the addition of remorse. And to be succeeded yet once more, by the returning carelessness, and addiction to vanity and the world. A melancholy and mysterious spectacle, such a man! (We could name examples.) We need not dwell on the instability, which he will display in conduct. "What phenomenon is this?" the observer would say, "there is no calculating on his conduct; he is all one thing,—and then, next, he is all another!"

But we would rather direct the attention to that double-mindedness which endeavours, in the habitual course of life, to combine inconsistent irreconcilable things. And how many exemplify this in the manner in which their minds are affected between the present and the future.

A predominance of regard to the great and endless future, is indispensable to the happy order of the human soul. But in some minds this concern rather harasses than predominates,—it cannot govern, but will not depart. And as it will not, it is attempted to be brought into some kind of compromise with the prevailing interest about the present objects. The soul gives itself, with its warmest passions, to these visible immediate objects,—these gratifications,—these advantages,—these accommodations of present existence; they occupy it,—please it,—would monopolize it. But no! the awful images of futurity,—of eternity,—rise up to forbid *that*. There is the warning thought, "These present objects will soon be no longer mine—I must leave them! and what will be the state of my soul elsewhere?" And there is terrible authority in this thought. It forces its demand on the conscience of such a man. There must

be some attention given to the concerns of future safety and final interests. There are, therefore, some serious thoughts;—some employments of a religious kind;—some abstinences and self-denials, under the impression of fear;—some prayers, however formal and constrained;—and vows, to make a much more full surrender sometime;—a kind of hope that this may suffice to prevent the final ruin, yet with dissatisfaction and apprehension. And this miserably interferes with, and imbitters, the interest of the present and temporal objects. Still! the heart cannot,—*cannot* let these objects sink down to the subordinate rank, and admit the predominance of the grand future ones. This miserable double-mindedness disturbs and distracts the tenor of a man's life. He goes on hesitating, embarrassed, impeded, and only succeeds in going wrong!

A man cannot really and effectually serve God and Mammon; but some men do earnestly try to combine these two services. The particular import of that term "*Mammon*," suggests one of these inconsistent combinations. There are men intent on wealth, covetous men, who yet endeavour to keep on some terms with God and religion. It is true, that when this is a passion thoroughly established, it is, perhaps, the most victorious of all, against any competition of religion. Still there are persons who wish to keep these two in some kind of junction. Their love of money predominates; but it would seem as if they would consecrate the vice by some sort of adherence to the service of God. They cannot be willing to *perish* for this sin! Therefore, they are punctual attendants on religious ordinances. They profess, and perhaps fancy they feel, a concern for the cause of God; are admirers of gospel doctrines;—can talk the whole range of evangelical language,—and exhibit much decency and regularity of conduct. And where, then, in all this, is the disturbance, and clashing, of the double-mindedness? You'll

soon see. *That* comes when the cause of God, the aid of religion, the claims of charity, demand or solicit some surrender of the beloved substance; then begin the internal conflict and the opposite pleadings;—the painful balancing, —the distress at the thought of parting; then begin the excuses to conscience, and the anger at conscience itself if it will not admit them;—then begin the evasions,—the casting all things on the all-sufficiency of Providence,—and all the contrivances of a disturbed mind to soothe itself. We need not repeat that this is where the evil passion has not taken entire possession of the mind,—for *then* there is nothing of all this internal disturbance,—there it is “*double-mindedness*” no longer. And there are instances to be found in which this fatal single-mindedness shall allow a man in the delusion of being a self-satisfied professor of religion.

It is much the same thing, we have said already, when we exemplify the character, denominated in the text, in the case of a man who approves some great general good object, but is influenced by a selfish interest against it. He may acknowledge the thing in question to be really in a high degree desirable and important,—he has some good sympathies with it,—wishes it were in some way accomplished, provided it were with perfect impunity to *him*; but its accomplishment, he apprehends, would involve a material sacrifice of his own individual private interest. This private interest rises up against all his convictions and better wishes and sympathies; and determines him to oppose the thing he pronounces so good. But yet, not without a painful consciousness of inconsistency, which his utmost efforts cannot reconcile, and which gives a wavering “*unstable*” character to his course of proceeding.

See, again, the character in the text exemplified in the case of a man harassed between the dictates of his own

judgment and conscience, on the one side, and the consideration of how he will be accounted of in the world, on the other side. That wretched servility to opinion!—how many wise convictions, and excellent purposes, has it frustrated! The apprehended contempt of an ignorant multitude,—or of the censure or scorn of those who bear a great sway in worldly society,—the discountenance of fashion,—the imputation of singularity, fanaticism, and other such things,—it is marvellous what a power they have against the best determinations of the mind. These had power to shame away from the society of heavenly wisdom and transcendent goodness, in the person of the Messiah, numbers of such as did really believe him the noblest inhabitant of the earth. And yet, when a man's judgment and conscience are deeply laid hold of, he cannot make this sacrifice to the world's opinion, without great and painful struggles which will often make his conduct fluctuating and unsteady. Let him ask himself, "Whom am I offending, to please these? Is it the Supreme Judge?"

The attempted combination of things which cannot truly agree is exemplified in some, who wish to carry an appearance and a profession of belonging to the Christians, the people of God, and at the same time are very desirous of being on the most favourable terms with worldly and irreligious society. Thus they not only will regularly frequent religious assemblies, but will wish to hold a formal connexion with some Christian society, and to be accounted as religious,—would be offended at being adjudged not to be so. And it would seem that they really take some interest in religion. At the same time they allege that they have many points of obligatory and unavoidable connexion with the irreligious part of the community; and they see no good, they say, in rigour, precision, and puritanism,—and therefore, they must have liberty ("within the limits of

innocence and propriety") to join them in many of their social habits, practices, amusements, where the Christian, that is, specifically and expressly such, may, for the time, be laid aside. Now, that this *can* be done, habitually and on system, is very strange. If there *be* any genuine religious principle, there must often be a most uneasy internal consciousness—a sense of contrariety and unappeasable strife of feelings, a war between the two interests for the more complete possession of the man. And at all events, there is externally a contradiction, a want of unity of character. It is "*instability in a man's ways*," with a witness, that the same person should, at one time seek the communion of the faithful, employ himself in gravely reading the bible, join in social devotions, perhaps sometimes taking what may be called the active part in them,—and should, at the next turn, be found the voluntary associate, on the most free and easy terms, with the despisers of religion,—waste his precious time among them—join with them in what is no better than dissipation, in thoughtless gaieties and trifling amusements. Will he—will he—pretend to plead that it recommends religion thus to show men that it has no austere and repulsive rigours? Alas! if he can fancy he is recommending religion by the very course in which he is betraying it! The lesson he actually gives to these companions is, either that they have as much religion as he, and therefore, they would presume, enough,—or, that it is a thing which may safely be done without altogether; that they may well dispense with what practically makes so little difference.

You will easily see that all these forms of the "*double-minded*" character, are only shapes, a little varied, of the one grand inconsistency, the desire to preserve peace with conscience, and yet at the same time to indulge the dispositions which conscience cannot approve. And as long as

this inward strife and alternation of principles continues, it must forbid "*stability in a man's ways*,"—it must disturb the tenor of his conduct into uncertainty, variableness, and confusion.

We will only add to the description one more particular, —and that of a doctrinal reference. There seems to be in some persons a "*double-minded*" apprehension of the meritorious cause of human salvation,—a notion of some kind of distributive partition of the merit, between the sinful being himself and Jesus Christ. Now this must produce a painful perplexity and instability in a man's experience, and in his religious exercises and efforts. For it can never be adjusted, on each side, how much. If the Redeemer will not, of mere free favour, furnish *all* for justification, *where will he stop?* If I am to contribute essentially, meritoriously, myself, *what will suffice?* by what rule is it to be estimated? Will thus much, or so much, be enough? Have I what will be enough? Can I possibly do, can I bring to the divine justice, what will, as my part, be enough? And how shall I know? When can I be sure I am safe? I hope that Jesus Christ may in his bounty supply almost all, *almost!* but what will the deficiency be? And can I add the deficient links to the golden chain, to connect it with my soul? What a melancholy "*strait between two!*" Unstable, therefore, is such a man in his feelings, in his efforts, in his prayers. Oh that human pride should be able to keep up the distraction of this perplexity!

III. There is no time for more than a very few words on the concluding part of the subject; that is, what is the remedy for all this?

The great thing to quell all this mischief, and conflict, and wretchedness, is to have one grand predominant sovereign purpose of life. And what can that be, but, to live for God and eternity! How gloriously this would crush the

hateful strife ! and bring us out free, in singleness of spirit, for the enterprise of immortality !

The means conducive, under the Divine influence, to the establishment of this great predominant principle and power, are most plain and obvious. Let the man, who feels the plague of this internal dissension, let him look most deliberately, most resolutely, and, as in the sight of God, at the motives, the objects, the interests, which divide and baffle his spirit ; and solemnly decide, what it is that deserves to have the ascendancy. And then, that which, he sees, does so deserve, let him consider what means there are to aggravate the force of its righteous demands, to give it more power over him—and to reduce the power of the opposing forces. Let him see what there is that he can apply to these convicted foes and traitors, to paralyze their grasp ;—whether there be not, in Heaven's own store of medicines, something by which he can poison the serpents ;—whether he cannot obtain a sacred fire, before which the foul fiends cannot stand. Let him look at those, dead or living, who were or are, actuated by the noble simplicity and unity of purpose. Let him consider what he is both suffering and losing,—what is life worth in this condition of internal disquietude and distraction ? his soul the scene of a wretched conflict, at his expense—trodden down, as it were, under the strife, to decide whether he shall live for any purpose or not. And what he is losing all the while ! losing the labour of his vital powers—spending his strength for nought ;—losing his time,—the inestimable advantages for the attainment of the final good,—the present happiness he might be enjoying,—the benefits of the Redeemer's work,—the day of grace and salvation. Let him consider (and be alarmed)—that the allowed continuance of this divided state of his mind,—of this conflicting, alternate actuation of the opposed principles—will be exceedingly likely

to end in the decided final predominance of the worse ! For the worse—they have human nature on their side,—the sad corruption,—the old man, constantly working for them ; —they touch this native ground, and are strengthened afresh, like the fabled giant, whose powers in combat were continually renewed by contact with the earth, his parent. By continuance, too, these worse contesting principles have *habit* on their side, the most infernal ally of evil principles, —an angelic one of the good.

And lastly, as God is,—if we may speak so,—the supreme unity, simplicity, consistency, stability, in the universe, the soul must have a firm connexion with Him, so as to be in a humble sense, (what we should not venture to express if his own word had not) a “*partaker of the Divine nature,*” by his Spirit imparted, through the medium of the Redeemer. And then these opposing evil principles and powers in the soul will shrink in the strife,—will no longer prevail, though they linger to struggle,—will have received the touch of death,—and will perish wholly and for ever when the spirit is at last set free from mortality and this infected world.

LECTURE LXVIII.

OUR IGNORANCE OF OUR FUTURE MODE OF EXISTENCE.

1 JOHN iii. 2.

“It doth not yet appear what we shall be.”

IT is the familiar experience of our thinking, that the mind is often led into questions, the pursuit of something not clearly known, and desired to be known. And many of these questions are such as, being pursued, soon lead the thinking spirit to the brink, as it were, of a vast unfathomable gulf. It is arrested, and becomes powerless at the limit; there it stands, looking on a dark immensity; the little light of intellect and knowledge which it brings or kindles, can dart no ray into the mysterious obscurity. Sometimes there seems to be seen, at some unmeasured distance, a glimmering spot of light, but it makes nothing around it visible, and itself vanishes.

But often it is one unbounded, unvaried, starless, midnight darkness,—without one luminous point through infinite space. To this obscurity we are brought in pursuing any one of very many questions of mere speculation and curiosity. But there is one question which combines with the interest of speculation and curiosity an interest incomparably greater, nearer, more affecting, more solemn. It is the simple question—“WHAT SHALL WE BE?” How soon it is spoken!—but who shall reply? Think, how profoundly this question, this mystery, concerns us,—and in comparison with this, what are to us all questions of all sciences? What to us all researches into the constitution

and laws of material nature? What—all investigations into the history of past ages? What to us the future career of events in the progress of states and empires? What to us—what shall become of this globe itself, or all the mundane system? What **WE** shall be, *we ourselves*, is the matter of surpassing and infinite interest!

There is in the contemplation a magnitude, a solemnity, which transcends and overwhelms our utmost faculty of thought. To think that we, who are here, and are thus in possession of an existence which is but as of yesterday,—shall continue to be in some mode, and in some scene of existence, for millions of ages, and that *that* will still be as nothing, in comparison with what is still to follow! that a duration passing away beyond all reach of the stupendous power of numbers, will still be as nothing! And that it will still be *we ourselves*, the very same beings. And that it will be a perfectly specific manner of being—with a full consciousness of what it is—an internal world of thought and emotion—a perfect sense of relations to the system in which we shall find ourselves placed;—and this a continual succession of distinct sentiments and experiences, and with the constant certainty of the train going on for ever!

Reflect again, that it is *we, ourselves*, of whom we are saying this. How overpowered are we in the attempt to realize to thought, what nevertheless will be so!—"I, that am now, that am here, that am thus;—what shall I be, and where, and how, when this vast system of nature shall have passed away?" What,—after ages more than there are leaves, or blades of grass, on the whole surface of this globe, or atoms in its enormous mass, shall have expired? What—after another such stupendous lapse of duration shall be gone? Those terms, of amazing remoteness, will arrive; yes, those periods, the very thought of which engulfs our faculties, will *be come*, will *be past*!

And through every step and advance, in the incalculable succession, on through those periods, the fact of what we then ARE, will be in mighty evidence pressing on all our perceptions, and then still onward, infinitely, eternally beyond; and will be definable, in certain terms of a language (shall we call it?), in which we shall then form or express our conceptions. "I am"—but what will follow?—what will the description be? what constitution, what manner, of existence? what faculties? how exerted? what feelings? what employments? what relations? what communications? what place? There will be the fact, the actual reality, answering to all these questions. But what it will be, there is but One Intelligence that perfectly knows. But here, even in our own breasts, are the intelligences that will know, and know in their own experience,—the incomparably most interesting manner of knowing.

And is not this, beyond all others, the subject for deep and solemn musing—for intense inquisitiveness—for awful wonder?

Think again, of what diminutive concern, in comparison, are many of those ambitious inquiries to reach the Unknown, which have been the most intense excitement to investigating minds. To ascertain, for instance, the yet unknown course of a great river, has excited the invincible ardour of some of the most enterprising of mortals—who, in long succession, have dared all perils, and sacrificed their lives. To force a passage among unknown seas and coasts, in the most frowning and dreadful regions and climates; to penetrate to the discovery of the hidden laws, and powers, and relations of nature; to ascertain the laws, the courses, the magnitudes, the distances, of the heavenly bodies;—something—is the truth, in all these subjects of ambitious and intent inquisition. But what if all this could be known?—If we could have the entire structure of this

globe disclosed, to its very centre, to our sight or intelligence;—if, through some miraculous intervention of divine power, we could have a vision of the whole economy of one of the remotest stars;—or if (to turn to a different department,) our intelligence could pass down, under a prophetic illumination, to the end of time in this world, beholding, in continued series, the grand course of the world's affairs and events;—what would any or all of these things be, in comparison with the mighty prospect of our own eternal existence?—with what is to be revealed upon us, and to be realized in our very being, and experience, through everlasting duration?

When we think of such a comparison we may justly indulge some regret and wonder, that very many inquisitive minds,—perhaps the far greater number of such,—should feel an immeasurably greater degree of curiosity, interest, and even solicitude, in directing their thoughts to the unknown and the future of the inferior subjects of conjecture and anticipation, than to this superlatively important unknown. Not that we would wish to throw any disparagement on the conjectural inquisitive excursions of mind on any subject of inquiry. But surely it is a proof of strange perversion in the soul of man, that these eager excursions to penetrate into the remote and obscure, should go on every track rather than on the grand line of its own future existence!

It would not be an adequate nor an honest plea, to allege that the knowledge is beyond our reach. In any matter where we feel a profound prospective interest, the thoughts, the imagination, will go that way, by an irresistible attraction. When certain that there is to be something great, and immensely important to ourselves—the spirit goes forth towards it, earnestly tries to look into the distance—eagerly seizes all glimpses, intimations, prognostics—

revolves the probabilities, the possibilities—exerts its utmost power of reason, conjecture, invention—to form to itself an image of what the fact may be. And how prodigiously, how monstrously strange it were, that there should not be the very utmost of this ardent excitement in the anticipation of what we shall be, hereafter and for ever. This earnest tendency to look forward should be natural and rational, we think, notwithstanding that such darkness rests over the immense interminable scene of our future existence.

But still,—the question will arise, Why is it so overshadowed with darkness,—since it concerns us so deeply,—since it is ours? There is something that is ours, which is to be a thousand years hence, a million of years hence, a million of ages hence, a million times that—and so forward; it *is* ours, for it is certain *to be*, and certain to be *inseparable from us*. It is to be even ourselves, as absolutely ours as the state we are to be in to-morrow is so;—nay, as much as the state we are in this moment belongs to us. But then, the case being so,—why are we so precluded from a foresight which would in some measure enable us to realize, to our apprehension, that future state of ourselves?—One obvious thing in answer is, the essential impossibility. Reflect, in the first place, how very imperfectly we comprehend even our present existence,—after all manner of experience of it, and intimacy with it. Diminutive as we are, we involve a world of mystery. The acutest, the profoundest investigators have been baffled. What is life? What is soul? What is even body? How combined? And if we had the means of pursuing the inquiry into our future state, it may be presumed that every mystery would be aggravated upon us. It is true, that the great “Revealer of secrets” could have told us, by revelation, some things respecting the future state which we might, in some super-

ficial general manner, have understood. For example,—whether the disembodied spirit will have a material vehicle? Whether there will be a formal process of judgment on it at death? In what place it shall dwell till the resurrection? Whether it will, during that interval, be apprised of the transactions on this earth? Whether it will have sensible, intimate communications with superior spirits? Whether it will have a clearer, vaster manifestation of the grand scene of the creation? Whether it will have a luminous foresight of what it will become at the resurrection? When, and of what kind, will be the local habitations thereafter? What the employments will chiefly consist of?

All this, however, would have reached but a little way, oh how little, into the eternal progression!—even if so far it gave us light. But what we would insist on, is, that all disclosures given of the future state would have been, to us, faint and inefficient information. For, if it had been given in terms merely general, it would have left our conceptions in a state nearly as vague and unsatisfactory as ever, no definite substance; and, in particular and specific terms it could not have been given, without becoming either unintelligible or degraded; for, it must have been given either in terms of very close analogy with our present state, —or in terms (if any such could have been found) fitted and true to the nature of a vastly different economy. Suppose the former; that is, terms and images belonging to our present state,—then, the descriptive information would have been degraded. For then, the whole vision, that should have been so grand, would have been brought down *towards* the level, though not quite *to* it, of our present notions and state,—our modes of life,—of habitation, of narrow limited activity, of imperfect social communication. There would be a servile analogy or resemblance to our manner of relation to place, to surrounding elements, to the modes and sources

of pleasure—and to our means and instruments of knowledge and power. In short, the whole revealed description must have been conformed to the apprehensions of beings living in these gross bodies, and having all their ideas modified by their bodily senses. But this would be to humiliate, to degrade, the description and theory of a superior state; and not only would the description be degraded,—but it would not be true. On such accounts, a thinking and aspiring mind feels little satisfaction or complacency in any of those imaginary particular representations of what the economy of a superior world may be supposed to be—(not excepting the excellent Dr. Watts's). There is a recoiling feeling,—“That is far too like things as they might be here—that is making only a superior terrestrial state.”

We supposed, on the other hand, the revealed specific description of a future state to be given in terms truly appropriate to a quite different and higher economy,—and then it would have been unintelligible. But, in truth, the supposition itself is unintelligible and absurd. That would be the language of another world. No terms could convey to us a totally different order of ideas; no human language could do it,—and any other would be but the mysterious emblems of eternity—bright, indeed, on yonder side, toward heaven, but dark on this, toward us. Such a revelation would be a sun in total and perpetual eclipse.

We say, then, that it does not “yet appear what we shall be,” plainly because it is impossible.

If we went no further in the inquiry than merely the state immediately after death, the separate state,—we can instantly conceive, that when the soul is taken out of this body with all its senses, and therefore out of the whole system of relations with the senses, and all the modes of perception belonging to the senses, it must be in a state of which no specific ideas can be conveyed to us.

We may next observe, that even supposing, contrary to all this, that some specific conceptions of the future state could be, and were, conveyed to us, the effect would not be what we are ready to imagine. We are apt to fancy how mightily and permanently striking and commanding such ideas would be. But no—they would become gradually familiarized among our ideas, and lose their extraordinary and, so to speak, extra-mundane quality and power of impression. They must be mingled with our ordinary conceptions, be adverted to in our ordinary language, and would soon cease to be like messengers sent to us from the dead and the world of spirits.

A far stronger impression is made on *thinking* spirits (and on others *nothing* makes an impression), by an undefined magnificence, by a grand and awful mystery,—when we are absolutely certain that there is a stupendous reality veiled in that mystery; when quite certain, too, that it relates to ourselves—and that it will, at length, be disclosed.

Such a grand reality, thus mysteriously veiled, attracts thinking spirits most mightily—like the mystic and awful recess in the inmost part of the temple. It keeps in action the inquisitiveness, conjectures, expectation. It sets the mind on imagining the utmost that it can of grandeur and importance; and the idea still is, after the utmost efforts, “It is far greater than even *all that!*”

And thus, if we will think, this grandeur veiled in darkness has a more powerful effect on the mind, than any distinct particulars made palpable to our apprehension—and brought down to our level in order to be made so. So far, then, it is better that it should not “yet appear what we shall be.”

We may also advert to the common and just observation,—that in this life men are placed in this world’s relations, a system of relations corresponding to our inhabiting a gross,

frail, mortal body, with all its wants and circumstances. And that we have to perform all the various business of this world. That there are innumerable thoughts, cares, employments, belonging inseparably to this our state; and that, therefore, there must not be such a manifestation of the future state as would confound, stop, and break up, this system. It is true, that what we have been saying, nearly amounts to this—namely; that no revelation in words, such as we could clearly understand, would so take hold on our minds as to produce any such effect. To produce such an effect, there must, then, be mighty and portentous circumstances and appearances, extraordinary interferences, things to astonish and shake the constitution of our nature; or else, perfectly extraordinary impressions forced on our minds, to give us intimations, and, as it were, specimens of another state of existence, and produce overpowering emotions concerning it. This could be if God so willed, but this must not be, because it would unfit men for the regular performances of the business of life.

We only add that other plain reason for our being kept in such ignorance of the exact nature of the future state, namely; that FAITH is to be the grand principle of our feelings and conduct respecting hereafter. We are to believe, to be persuaded, and to act conformably to that persuasion,—the whole present system must be consonant with this. And this appointment of faith to be the actuating principle, is partly, as we see, because it cannot be otherwise; and partly because, to be governed by the declarations and will of God is the vital essence of all the obligations of his creatures.

But now, will it not be said, that the latter part of these representations does, in effect, contradict the former; that we first make it a reproach to men that they so little direct their thoughts and imagination to a future state,—and that,

next, we acquit them, by showing the impossibility of forming any clear conceptions of it, if they did so direct their minds? What is the use, it may be said, of indulging our musings and inquisitive conjectures on the unknown? We answer, it is necessary, when there is such a stupendous reality, for certain, before us, it is evidently a primary duty to think of it, and with deepest interest:—and we cannot think of it as one simple, single, invariable idea. The mind must go, or attempt to go, in some degree, into special modes of conception respecting it.

Again, it is an elevating and spiritualizing exercise of the mind. It tends to carry the soul a little way toward its proper region. It tends to lessen the false importance of the things of this world, and to slacken their hold. It contributes to obviate that unnatural and pernicious estrangement and dissociation between our present and future state. It tends to habituate the spirit to seek and find the grand importance of its existence in its hereafter. It tends to awake a lively and a sacred curiosity—which is surely a right and worthy state of feeling with which to go toward another world and to go into it. It may help to turn to valuable account the varieties in the present system of our existence—the facts in surrounding nature—the immediate circumstances of our own being, by,—prompting, on each particular, the thought and the question, “What, corresponding to this,—what in contrariety to this, what, instead of this,—may there be in that other world?” It may aid to keep us associated with those who are gone thither. It may give new emphasis to our impression of the evil of sin, and the excellence of all wisdom, holiness, and piety, by,—the thought, “What manner of effect is this—or this—adapted to result in, in that future state?”

By this exercise of contemplative anticipation, we may make excellent use of those figures and emblems in which

revelation has shadowed out the future state, carrying the thoughts as far as we can from the mere figure, to what would, in a higher sense, best correspond to it. In such an exercise, the particular character of the individual's mind, his taste, his less or greater abstraction in thinking, will, and very properly may, have a leading influence. Many pious minds may love to imagine something very considerably in analogy with the present order of existence,—only greatly raised and refined, but never losing sight of the parallel; and this will, no doubt, greatly contribute to a distinctness of ideas; an analogous order of senses—and as adapted to them, beautiful and sublime scenes, enchanting music of sounds, &c.

With others the wish will be to go as far away from resemblance as is possible without going into absolute and impalpable abstraction, into an unrealizable vacuity. And this, we think, is strongly warranted by what is said of the nature of the body which shall be constituted at the resurrection, and by the consideration of its immortality. Something widely, immensely different from all that belongs to it now, is surely implied by the assertion that it is to be like “the glorious body” of the Mediator. What can we imagine of that body? Far, very far, surely, from any close analogy with this earthly structure. Consider it too, as capable of rising to “meet the Lord in the air.” Consider, again, that pointed contrast, rather than any parallel, which the apostle exhibits in his account of it, a body raised in “glory,” in “power,” in “incorruption,”—and, to crown all, a “spiritual” body. He displays this body in lofty triumph over the present body. The description gives the full impression of something, not only immensely different, but specifically and essentially different. And then consider the strange, the mysterious circumstance of its immortality. A bodily structure immortal!—adapted to live for ever and

ever. Here we are carried away out of all conceivable analogy, as by the whirlwind that took Elijah away.

In this its immortality, we are not to suppose the operation of a perpetual miracle,—but,—that it will be naturally immortal, by the same essential law as the soul is so; that it will not have, either in its material consistence or its vital organization, any inherent principle of decay. But how confounded is all intellect or fancy, in the attempt to conceive of such a body,—or of its senses, parts, or vital action. And if we attempt to imagine a material scenery, and order of elements, corresponding in quality to such a body, how lost are we again! Yet such a representation calls upon us, not to forbear thinking on the mysterious subject,—but to aim at thinking sublimely.

But after all, and amidst all, our efforts to conceive of the mode of the future existence, it will be well to occupy our contemplations much upon the grand general elements of the future felicity:—holiness—charity—wisdom—power—immortality—enjoyment of the Divine presence and benignity.

And finally, let no curiosity of high speculation beguile us, for a moment, out of recollection of the one mighty difference,—of the two grand opposites,—in the future state, the condition of the redeemed and purified, and the unbelieving and unrighteous.

LECTURE LXIX.

THE CHRISTIAN IDEA OF THE PERFECTIBILITY OF MAN.

1 CORINTHIANS xiii. 10.

“When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.”

ONE of the general ideas naturally arising at the repetition of such worlds would be, that FUTURITY is *the greatness of man*, and that *hereafter* is the grand scene for the attainment of the fulness of his existence. When depressed and mortified by a conscious littleness of being, yet feeling emotions and intimations which seem to signify that he should not be little, he may look to futurity and exclaim, *“I shall be great yonder!”* When feeling how little belongs to him, how diminutive and poor his sphere of possession here, he may say, “The immense futurity is mine! I may be content to be poor awhile in the prospect of that!” If here obscure and even despised, he may reflect, “Well, it is not here that I expect, or want, to verify my importance.” If forcibly admonished of the brevity of life, the thought may arise, “Well, the sooner my entrance on a life that shall have no end.”

Another thing we may observe upon the words is, that it is most gratifying to see the divine revelation connecting the attribute, the condition of *perfection*, on any terms, in any sense, at any future period, with human nature. It would be gratifying if this were but intimated as a mere possibility;—it is most emphatically so, to see it expressed as an assurance—a promise. Think of man, the combina-

tion of all defects! Let any conceivable excellence be named, and the very mention of it is, in effect, a reproach to *him*, as not having it, or having it in but a very deficient measure. Whoever does possess the most of any one of them, is deeply lamenting to perceive how partial, how miserably little, the amount is, compared with even far less than perfection. Looking at man, we seem to see a vast collection of little beginnings,—attempts,—failures; like a plantation on a bleak and blasted heath. And the progress in whatever is valuable and noble, whether in individuals or communities, is so miserably difficult and slow. So that “*the perfectibility of man*,” in the sense in which that phrase has been employed, stands justly ridiculed as one of the follies of philosophic romance. Then how delightful is it to see revelation itself, pronouncing as possible, and predicting as to come, something “perfect” in the condition of man.

Next observe, that this prediction of something “perfect” to come, relates to *knowledge*. This is somewhat surprising. It seems much more easy to conceive of perfection in another state attained or conferred, in any of what may be called the *moral* attributes, than in *knowledge*, even in any moderate and comparative sense. For instance;—perfect rectitude of the actuating principle, the motives;—perfect reverence of the Supreme Being;—a perfect spirit of obedience;—perfect “charity;”—or, to say all in one, perfect *holiness*. These are things of a more simple and absolute nature;—qualities to be created and fixed within the being itself;—simply a rectification of its own constitution and habitude, which we can conceive effected by a single act of the Divine Power. But *knowledge* is not a state of the dispositions of the intelligent being,—not an intrinsic quality of its nature; but an intellectual relation which it has with *other* things, with *any* thing, with *all* things, which can come

within the sphere of its apprehension. The scope of this relation has no necessary limit;—but is quite indefinite; and may be amplified through every successive period of duration. All things in the stupendous totality of existence, and even in possibility, are subjects for knowledge. To hear, then, from the voice of divine truth, a prediction for men, of perfection in knowledge, in any, the most limited, accommodated sense, is very marvellous. It is a sublime prospect, contemplated under the most limited sense of the terms which display it to us.

Let us attempt, for a few moments, to realize to our imagination such a state of knowledge as our text would imply.

The lowest point we can take, in the first place, is *the exclusion of error*;—or, in other words, that all *opinion* will be *truth*. The intellect must be perfectly rectified in its mode of perception and action; and the objects on which it is employed undeceptively presented to it. So that, if the manner of apprehending be *intuition*, the objects will be made clearly self-evident. Or, if there be an exercise like reasoning, the evidence will be explicit, and the reasoning process infallible; so that every thing admitted as knowledge shall be absolutely such. It could not but be in the heavenly state, a painful, a melancholy thing, for the spirit, after exulting in the reception of a portion of knowledge, to find out that it had been imposed on and deluded;—to be beset at each progressive stage, with the suspicion that the apparent advance is perhaps to be trodden back again, as just so far wrong. So far, then, the knowledge will be “perfect,” that nothing delusive and erroneous will be included in what is taken for knowledge.

Again; we may conceive its perfection in this sense—namely, that it will be perfectly adequate to the infallible

direction of all the activities of the superior state. Those activities we may well believe to be of vast extent and endless variety. But suppose a knowledge competent to them all; an infallible knowledge, *what* to do, and *when*, and by *what means*;—a perfect knowledge what power the agent has for accomplishing the objects; a certain foresight of the result;—a perfect judgment what is right, what is the best;—a perfect understanding of what is the Divine Will. So that the whole system of action of the immortal beings shall proceed under a luminous intelligence, which permits no doubt, or apprehension, or mistake, or failure.

The knowledge of the inhabitants of the better world will doubtless be perfect in this sense; namely—that they will possess as much of it as is indispensable to their happiness, and will be sensible that they do so. They will not feel that some of the essential means of their felicity are concealed in the shade which lies beyond the great and illuminated field of their vision. They will not be in the condition of the apostle John, who looked on the sealed book, and “wept” because there was none to open it. On the contrary, each one will be able to say, “I am happy in this light,—happy, till the Father of lights shall see good to make me still more so, by opening to me another book yet sealed—to expand still further this wide and glorious vision.”

We may perhaps, assume to add,—that these happy beings will possess always as much knowledge, as for the time their faculties are actually capable of admitting—there will be “no craving void.” So that, as to what they cannot then know, it will not be that it is arbitrarily withheld—causing them to say, “If it were but told me—if it were but disclosed, I could understand it.” This is our case here,—there doubtless are a vast number of things kept in the dark from us, which we could understand if they were

but declared; and there is sometimes a most restless wish to know them. That knowledge may be called perfect, which shall be so, relatively to the capacity, of the intelligent being. Imagine this, and then imagine a continual sensible enlargement of the capacity itself, and *as* it enlarges, a continual influx of new knowledge to fill it.

We should take some advantage of the apostle's mode of illustrating, by a contrast between "that which is in part," and that "perfect" which is to come.

We may advert to the imperfect, partial nature of our *means* of knowledge. It is a mysterious thing in the all-wise Creator's economy, that intellectual beings, spirits, should be enclosed in gross matter, and made dependent for their action on its organization,—but so it is. The senses contained in this material frame, the grand inlets of our knowledge, must and do convey it in a most imperfect manner. These, while they are the medium of knowledge, yet keep up an insuperable separation between the mind, the spirit, and the objects desired to be known. Through them it can receive only reports and images of the things. It cannot itself come at the things themselves. How it wishes sometimes that it could! It longs to know what things are in their own reality.

Language, again, is a most imperfect medium for the conveyance of knowledge;—it is indeed framed upon our imperfect knowledge, and partaking of all its defects. It is contrived by men to express what they very imperfectly conceive and know, and is full of indistinctness, uncertainty, perplexity, confusion. But, "when that which is perfect is come!"—it may be said, "What then? What will then be the mode, the medium, the instruments, of our receiving and conveying knowledge?" We cannot even conjecture, till it *do* come. But it must be something immensely different, whether or not in analogy with the present means.

One almost dislikes to suppose, in that more perfect state, even a resemblance to such feeble things as hearing, seeing, feeling, language. But the sovereign and beneficent Creator, in forming his creature anew in a far nobler condition, will infallibly do it for the best. And if there be to be senses, and any artificial instruments of knowledge analogous to the present, let them be but as much superior to these as a "spiritual body," made like the glorified body of Christ, will be superior to this "earthly," mortal one, and it will suffice.

But whatever shall be the means and manner of apprehending,—the apprehension must be incomparably more immediate and intimate than in this world, to satisfy the exalted intelligence. And that there will be this pervading intelligence, this intimacy of knowledge, seems to be implied by what the apostle says, "I shall know even as also I am known," that is, by the divine Spirit. So "when that which is in part shall be done away, and that which is perfect is come," the *manner* of knowing shall be an entire, a complete one, as to the means and instruments. (Here note the imperfection of the other great mean of knowledge, *reasoning*.)

Again;—how emphatically our present knowledge is but "in part," if we advert to the number and extent of the things to be known. It is but a diminutive portion of the grand whole of things, that we can even be so apprised of as to be aware that we are ignorant of them. We can think no question at all about them. But take even so much as we are apprised of enough to make subjects of inquiry; and just think, how many can be answered of all the questions we can ask? To a vast proportion of them there is no possible answer at all. To a great majority of the rest, that do not go entirely beyond our sphere, the answer is extremely doubtful. And as to the comparatively

few that we seem to think we can reply to, we find, when we try, that the answer is that of but a very partial knowledge.

“When that which is perfect is come,” it will not bring an answer to all possible inquiries;—*that* were to extend our knowledge beyond an archangel’s compass; but it may well be believed that it will be amazing and delightful to see what a multitude of things, of which we had but the faintest glimpses before, are brought into perfect manifestation. What a revelation there may be in two senses;—in the vast enlargement of the mind’s own proper power of knowing, while it looks from a higher eminence over a wider field;—and in the direct disclosures and communications which the Divine Being may beneficently make. His present revelation is the greatest blessing conferred on human intelligence on earth. But how obviously *that* is but “in part.” How many things are not mentioned!—how many with but a particle of information!—some are presented with an obscure and half-revealed aspect, like the moon, sometimes seen with a narrow line of light, and the disc opaque and dimly perceptible. And it would not be a wild imagination, that then there will be a still further new revelation, strictly such, to impart information of what will still be beyond the sphere of knowledge by any other means. And *that* also to become ultimately an immediate knowledge; and then a still further and further revelation; and so forward, interminably and for ever!

But all these anticipations remind us but the more forcibly, how we here “know but in part.” So “in part,” that just *the* part, the portion which we want to attain is divided off from our reach. It seems as if a dissevering principle, or a dark veil fell down exactly at the point where we think we are near upon the knowledge we are pursuing. We reach the *essential* question of the inquiry;

—let that be surpassed and we should arrive at the truth—exult in the knowledge. But just there we are stopped by something insuperable; and there we stand, like prisoners looking at their impregnable wall.

So “in part” our knowledge is, that an exceeding weight, we sometimes feel as if a disproportionate one, is thrown upon our *faith*. We cannot understand the case, and yet we must approvingly submit to Him who is the Master of all things; and our obedience must be as ready and unreserved as if we could. But this is a hard exercise for faith. In our partial view, appearances may seem against what we, nevertheless, are required most firmly to believe. It is difficult to maintain this faith, but is happily aided by the Divine assurance, that one day we shall know “when that which is perfect is come.”

So “in part” our knowledge is, that in many things we see far more of the evil than of the good, in the whole state of things, as far as within our comprehension. But we are sure that on the great view, to which we cannot yet attain, there *must* be a decided predominance of good, in the empire of Him who is infinite in wisdom, power, and goodness. And the anticipation of clearly seeing it so, is a delightful radiance from heaven on our present dark abode.

So “in part” our knowledge is, that we cannot agree one with another. The “part” itself is not clear, bright, and infallible, as far as it goes. It contains those shades, perplexities, and equivocal appearances, among which men *must* greatly differ. It would have been a fine thing if good men, and wise men, could have been unanimous on to the limited extent of this early stage and immaturity of our knowledge, and had not filled the twilight of the great approaching day of wisdom with their controversies and their quarrels. But when the “perfect comes,” the grand illumination of each spirit will be rendered inconceivably

more delightful by the coincidence of judgment which will create a happy sympathy and harmony of the affections.

We have no time to apply these somewhat too vague and general ideas to special subjects. But they might be illustrated in application to our imperfect knowledge of even our own nature, as in the essential principle of life;—the mysterious connexion of the soul with the body;—the nature and operations of that soul itself. How striking to reflect, that we can as yet, just as much comprehend the whole universe as our own little selves, our own selves, who are thinking and talking on these subjects. These ideas might also be viewed in their application to the theory of the condition and destination of our race;—the system of Divine Providence;—the doctrines of religion;—the manner of our future existence;—the inquiry, what rational beings, and under what economy, in other realms of the universe; and the universe itself.

After such views contemplated, think of the pride of present knowledge! with a little glimmering on their spirits there are men that walk the earth with an elation as if they should be gods;—and destitute too, as this very pride would show, of that which is the best of the knowledge attainable here!

Consider what a high advantage over us is now attained by our pious friends that are gone—even in that less perfect state which intervenes between the departure hence and the resurrection!

“Then that which is in part shall be done away.” Imagine the emerging from this dark world into light! what a dismissal from our spirits, what a vanishing away of the whole systems of our little notions; our childish conceptions! If they will be sufficiently recollected to be compared with the grand manifestation of truth and reality then unveiled, what a contrast! And yet there will not be

an entire contempt thrown upon the retrospect; for it will be understood how those little notions, that feeble light, that partial revelation, were the right training for the infancy and childhood of the human soul.

Let us, then, be thankful that we *do* know, though but in part, and earnestly apply and improve what we are permitted to know. Let us be thankful, too, that one point of that very knowledge is, that its imperfection will at length be left behind.

Lastly, if there will be, as none can doubt, in the heavenly state, different degrees in the felicity of the redeemed spirits, and if knowledge will be one great mean of felicity there, *who* may be expected to possess the highest attainments of it? Not necessarily those, even good men, who possessed the most of it here, but rather those who have excelled the most in *piety*,—in devotion to God and Christ, and the cause of heaven in this world. God *can*, by one great act of his rewarding power, make *them* the highest in *intelligence*, and it is reasonable to believe he *will*.

LECTURE LXX.

THE RELIGIOUS USE OF MEMORIALS.

JOSHUA xxiv. 26, 27.

“And Joshua took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of the Lord. And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold this stone shall be a witness unto us, for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us; it shall be therefore a witness unto you lest ye deny your God.”

THIS action of Joshua seems a strange importance to be conferred on a piece of insensible matter, on a mere block of stone, unnoticed, perhaps, for a thousand years. “*It hath heard*” is an excessively strong figure; but it is quite in the eastern style to give things the attributes of persons. Such a circumstance may suggest to us the reflection, how little it can be foreseen or conjectured to what use numberless things in the creation, apparently insignificant, are destined by divine appointment to be applied. They may be entirely unnoticed while awaiting that use, with no marks upon them to distinguish them from the most ordinary things of the same kind. For example, the trees out of which the ark of Noah or the ark of the covenant was to be constructed; the rod of Moses; the stones which were to be the tables of the law, to be written on them by the Almighty; the rams’ horns used at the siege of Jericho; we might add, the materials destined to the most awful use of all—THE CROSS. If these appear remote references, we may name a nearer and more pointed one. There *is*, as to

most of us—there is now existing, somewhere, the very wood which will form our coffins. Some of us may have passed near the very trees, or the wood no longer in the state of trees. The material bears no mark what it is for; but God has on it his secret mark of its destination. If it were visible, what a reading we should have of inscriptions!—tomb-inscriptions, seen beforehand!

It is striking to consider that the sovereign Lord has some appointed use for everything in his creation. The uses of an infinite number of things, *we* shall never know; but He can have made nothing but for an use—to that it will come. What a view has He on all things as bearing his destination! What a stupendous prospective vision, if we may express it so, before his mind!

But, we proceed to observe, that wise and good *men*, can find for many things, many uses, for instruction and piety, which do not occur to other men: they have been trained in a better school. If such a man, towards the close of life, could make out an account of the things that have served him to such a purpose, how many things, seeming not in themselves qualified to instruct him, would he have to recount as having been the occasions of his receiving instruction, or salutary impressions. It may, in some instance, have happened, that a thing as unmeaning in itself as a mere stone, has been made the cause of some spiritual advantage to him. Indeed, in many instances, the greatest good has been from insignificant things; while we must mind proportion between means and ends, it is not so with God.

In the instance in our text, Joshua, and in a later instance, Samuel, fixed on such an object, and endeavoured to render it, in a sense, a cause of religious admonition, thereafter, to the people, in the way of recalling to their minds the most important facts and considerations. The design was, that they might not be able to look at that

stone, without being reminded of "*all the words of the Lord.*" Figuratively speaking, it would be the stone saying to them—"I have heard," &c. The great leaders of the Israelites, Moses and Joshua, were solicitous to employ every expedient to secure an eternal remembrance of God in the people's minds. They therefore marked the stations and stages in their progress with monumental circumstances and objects;—things which should have a meaning put on them which they had not in themselves;—a meaning which they were to have in consequence of being connected, in some express and memorable manner, with the providential interferences of God, or his declarations, or with the people's conduct. It was not enough that human and even angelic monitors should be speaking. They saw that all was little enough, and too little, to keep religious ideas and recollections alive in the people's minds; these were apt to fade and die away, like plants in a bad soil. They perceived how constantly the popular mind was withdrawing and escaping from under the impressive sense of an invisible Being; how easily the delusions of the surrounding idolatry stole on their senses and their imagination, to beguile their hearts, and their very reason away; how imperfectly the grand scene of Nature, of the Creation, preserved, in any active force, the thought of the Creator; how apt to grow feeble and faint was their memory of even the miraculous events which themselves had beheld! Therefore, these illustrious and pious leaders and teachers were desirous to avail themselves of every auxiliary means to prolong the remembrance, to renew and fix the impressions in the people's minds, of all that had taken place between God and them; to surround them with remembrances, turn which way they would, traverse the land in whatever direction they might. Accordingly, they marked places, and times, with monuments; built altars; raised heaps of stones, (as at the passage of

Jordan); set up single great stones, gave significant names to places; carefully preserved particular things as "*the rod that budded*," and a portion of the manna, the censers of Korah, Dathan, &c.; appointed periodical observances at particular seasons. And they told the people, and explained to them expressly, what each of these things was for; so that *they* should be able to tell their posterity when they asked, "*What mean ye by these stones?*" And, doubtless, this "*great stone*" for instance, which was set up by Joshua, did, in a measure, answer this end. Tens of thousands of eyes must have looked at it with the perception of its memorial meaning.

Now, can all this be turned to no good account for *us*? Have we less of this unhappy tendency to forget things which ought to stand conspicuous in our memory, relative to our concerns with God? What kind of memory have we, for example, of the mercies of God? How many of them all do we, in any manner, recollect? How often do we recollect the most remarkable of them? With what force of impression? Do they come, many of them, like faint shadows, or a half-remembered dream? What a mist, what a night, has settled on our memory! Are we not like travellers who, going forward, have left all the long succession of objects out of sight, sunk below the horizon. Now, anything, any object of sight, any circumstance of place or time, that will assist to recall—*may* be of valuable service to us.

There may have been seasons, occasions, experiences, eminently adapted to instruct us. They have gone away, and what kind of remembrance have we of them? Circumstances, occasions, events, signally fitted to awaken and alarm us, have gone away—what remembrance have we of them? Striking temporary manifestations of the insufficiency and vanity of the world have gone by—what

remembrance have we of them? Illustrations of our entire helplessness, and our dependence on God; intense illuminations of truth; strong gleams of insight into the state of our own spirits and character; very strong manifestations and enforcements of duty; all these have gone by,—what remembrance have we of them?

Now, as to all such things, the plague and the grief is, that we are so apt to let them all go away into forgetfulness. *We* then, as much as ever the Israelites, need all manner of aids to revive the memory of them. It is plain enough, that the great general thing for this purpose is—a reflective, conscientious, seriousness of spirit. But, the point at present in our view is, that sometimes valuable advantage may be taken of particular circumstances, aiding to recall them. “*This stone shall be a witness to us.*” Everything that can be made a “*witness*” and remembrancer to us, is worth being made so; we should not despise its assistance. If a man were placed, knowingly and certainly, at the spot where some of the most memorable and awful transactions of all time took place, might he not take advantage of this, to think in a more impressive manner on those great events? And would he not do well? If in sight of Mount Ararat,—on Mount Sinai,—Carmel,—in Jerusalem,—on Mount Calvary,—on the shore of the Dead Sea?

God has put in the constitution of our minds this very useful law, that one thing helps to bring other things more forcibly to our thoughts, when there is any kind of relation. Let us look at a familiar exemplification or two. It may be, that some person here has, at some time, experienced a remarkable preservation or deliverance; perhaps in a situation of extreme peril, within, as we say, a hair’s breadth of a frightful injury, or death. Now, we would say to that person, “If you ever pass by that place, or see

the object which was so near being destructive, or anything that contributed to save you, let it be "*a witness*" to you. Fix on it, to excite your recollections of God's providential goodness: the dart of death was actually levelled,—God put a shield between. Or, suppose the apartment, or the bed where an oppressive sickness had brought its victim just to the gate of death. Or, suppose a person to have been narrowly saved from falling into some great sin,—and there was a happy intervention; any place, or object, seen or heard of, which has any near relation to that peril, or which averted it, should have the effect intended by the stone of Joshua. Suppose any other remarkable instance and token of the divine goodness. It will sometimes happen that there remains to be seen, perhaps, some particular object, some special circumstance connected with that experience,—let it be a remembrancer.

There have been, as we said, important lessons of instruction, given, perhaps, at an opportune and critical moment, adapted to have an invaluable influence through all subsequent life. Here, again, there may be, remaining to be seen, some particular thing or other which may recall those lessons to memory—a book—a letter—a house—the grave of the instructor. Let the attention fix on that thing—look at it and go back in thought. It may thus be made the occasional means to awake a train of grateful recollections; if the instruction was efficacious; or of humiliating penitential reflections—if it was in vain. "That instruction—that warning—oh, what a blessed thing, if I had had the conscience to attend to it!"

Perhaps there have been times when, under peculiar and strong impressions, we have made solemn resolutions and vows, as in the presence God. Now, there may be some monument of such solemn exercises and determinations; something more plain to sight than the mere record of

them in memory. There is at least some place—it may be some solitary spot, to which the person could go, and say, “Here it was that I made such a solemn resolution;” or there may be some written lines existing—if *faded*, even *that* may recall the past more forcibly; or some significant marks of memorandum not intelligible to any other eyes. One has known persons looking intently on a tree or shrub, planted on such an occasion. What a depth and emphasis of admonition there may be in such things to the conscious individual! It is like a voice speaking after him from a great distance, or a voice from the dead.

But, again, in the life of a mortal there have been iniquities—violations of conscience—transgressions against the Almighty. And think what a strange facility there is of sinking even these in forgetfulness!—as if mere time were a scape-goat!—as if we had *but* to forget them! But they ought to come often into grievous remembrance, even though believed to be pardoned;—but if not pardoned? In many instances there exist particular mementoes of past transgressions. Some men have even in their possession something they have *gained* by a sin. Some may see, in particular places, the marks of the mischief they have done by their iniquities, or by some one iniquity—some lasting afflictive consequence—some injured individual. A sinner may find himself walking along the very path by which once, long since, he went to a resort of iniquity, or came from it; he passes by the old tree, or gate, or brook, or bridge. A man may happen to meet, now sinking in age, a person who once remonstrated against his sinful ways; or may pass by the grave of one who was once an associate in evil. Let him stand by it, and reflect! Or he may enter once again an apartment to which he can recollect to have retired, loaded with the reproaches of his conscience. Or, not to suppose heinous sins, there may be presented to a man

various things which will remind him of a careless, irreligious season of his life; a Bible that he cared not to read; articles used for mere vain amusement and waste of time. Now, such monumental witnesses should suggest to a man to think of guilt, repentance, and pardon. He might fix his eyes on those objects while on his bended knees.

There are men in whose memories are repositied times and places when and where they trembled under "*the terrors of the Lord*." They can recollect when and where they were almost afraid to enter under a roof lest it should fall; to cross a stream lest it should suddenly rise and carry them away. If those "*terrors*" were banished only by returning carelessness and hardness, it were well if the sight of places and objects could so touch the conscience as to recall them, "Was it all absurd?—*had* I not reason?—what then, *now*?" If, through Divine mercy, those terrors were rendered efficacious, the grateful redeemed sinner may avail himself of these memorials of them, to become still more grateful. "This is the place;—that is the same time-piece, telling the same nightly hours that were then so dark and dismal to me." If there have been particular occasions which have excited in us a special and exceeding horror of particular sins, it were well for the attention to be sometimes arrested by any object strongly reminding us of those occasions, and tending to revive that impression, thus bringing a reinforcement to our present dread of those sins.

We need not go on to more particulars of illustration. These have been specified only as a few exemplifications of the possible advantage of doing what Joshua meant the Israelites should do. It is wise to seize upon *all* means of turning the past into lessons of solemn admonition; it is, as it were, bringing it back it to be *present*, that we may have it over again. With the instructing, sanctifying

influence of the Divine Spirit we may thus pass again, in thought, over the scenes of our life, and reap certain benefit *now*, even in those where we reaped none *then*. There is some consolation in this. "I had no good of them then—mercy brings it to me now." We may turn to inestimable account many things that to thoughtless spirits are insignificant and useless. And all the while we may be admonished that there is ONE who has a perfect memory of all that we may forget in our progress of time. May we be moved to an ardent zeal that, by the grace of God, what yet remains of life may, when *it* also shall be a subject of memory, yield more delightful recollections, when *its* memorials recall it.

LECTURE LXXI.

THE DIVINE JEWELS.

MALACHI iii. 17.

"They shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in the day when I make up my jewels."

It seems, then, the Lord of Hosts has something, even in this evil world, on which he sets a high and peculiar value;—notwithstanding there is so much that he condemns,—sometimes as if *all* were evil. Indeed, it were very strange if he had not, when we consider what it is for Him to have formed, sustained, governed, a world. Think of this mighty globe of matter! Why, it requires an angel's faculty to conceive any adequate notion of its very magnitude. There never was a man on earth who had space enough for it in his mind, if we may express it so. And then think of all its elements;—its marvellous order;—the laws of Nature, invented, established, maintained in perpetual force;—its productions. And then, its relation to the heavens. Next, the mighty scheme of Providence. And, the whole system of spiritual government. Now, in so vast a system of existence, and so immense and various an economy of operation and regulation, there *should* be found something peculiarly precious, and of which he may say, by eminence—"It is mine."

"*My jewels.*" It is a strong expression of value; is so among men. But, what can there be in this world that HE will set such eminent value upon? what, that can be "*jewels*" to Him? to Him, "*in whose sight the heavens are*

not pure, and who chargeth his angels with folly?" What account does *He* make of all that is the most splendid and costly among the *material* things of this world? What values *He* the unknown wealth, (unknown but to Him) of the mines of gold and silver, and all the other hidden wealth? What values *He* all the precious stones in the world—the riches of treasures—the sumptuousness of palaces, crowns, and thrones? But, nevertheless, there *is* something here which he condescends to call his "*jewels*;" something which he distinguishes from all that shines and sparkles, and glitters, with material lustre—from the things which the earthly and carnal inhabitants of the earth have the most coveted and idolized. What can it be here that he has had his gracious thoughts upon, even before the creation, and in the designs and decrees of eternity? What,—that his glorious Son should come down to seek and save? and to die in order to save? What,—that he watches to guard and preserve against the *grand thief*, ever vigilant upon the very same objects, who would, with pre-eminent exultation, plunder the earth of its great Monarch's "*jewels*;" and would not care for the whole globe in comparison? What,—that he will at length collect together into a bright assemblage? Ask the insatiable collectors of treasure, or of the rare productions of Nature or Art. Ask the ambitious potentates and conquerors; or even the proud philosophers. But we need ask no one. We can easily tell what,—for God has told us. The souls that have a heavenly quality in them,—a spiritual relation and resemblance to Himself, (therefore incorruptible and imperishable), a quality which he has put in them,—and is supernatural. They had it not originally,—and could not have acquired it from any or all the elements, material or intellectual, of this world. It is expressly called, "*a partaking of the Divine Nature.*" A mysterious thing! We

wonder at the properties which some things in material Nature are found to possess. Science is perfectly amazed at what is observed and discovered in them. But *here*, in souls divinely renewed, is something for still deeper wonder. Wonderful, how the soul receives this quality,—what is the precise nature of the operation which imparts it,—how a new relation to God is created? How far is this beyond all philosophy! Wonderful, how this quality is maintained, in defiance of an infinity of things opposed to it, in the soul, and without it. There adheres to the jewel itself something that is base and corrosive, tending to spoil it. But it is *not* wonderful that the spirits in which it dwells should be esteemed by the Lord of Hosts as his “*jewels*.”

They are scattered here and there, among earthly things. They are not in a collected state, except in the view of God. By Him they are seen as one faithful body, one sacred company and fraternity; but the human observer has to look upon them as separated among multitudes of objects of an unlike character. And, indeed, he does not wish them assembled into one exclusive company. If they can be safe in this dispersed intermingled state, they will be useful in it. And their safety can be trusted to their great Proprietor; he will place an array of protection round them. They are of very unequal degrees of purity and lustre. And some by their situation are less visible, though of high excellence. But, less or more, they do shine out, distinguished from the mere earthly objects surrounding them. Yet, often they have been accounted the very dross and offscouring of things. But *He*, to whom they belong, sees with another kind of sight,—with the infinite perfection of that sight with which all will, in a measure, see at last. God will make all see them in his light. A beam, as it were, of his radiant sight, falls on each individual, wherever placed on earth.

If there be a young person, even a child, that is beginning to think seriously of Him,—to desire his favour,—to fear to sin against Him,—to pray to Him,—to wish to serve Him,—*that* is one of his “*jewels*.” He has even a special and peculiar favour for what continues so short a time in its mere earthly and corrupt state,—for what is acquiring so soon the quality of Heaven,—for what will have so much longer reflected his image here on earth, if continuing the full term of mortal life,—for what so short a time belongs to any other lord than himself. The god of this world cannot say—“These may at last have become the property of my great enemy; but I have a fair claim to them, for they were long mine.”

If there be a truly repenting sinner,—alarmed to escape from a condition which he has begun to deplore and abhor, and applying earnestly for mercy in the name of Jesus Christ,—*that* is one of his “*jewels*.” The divine transforming principle has entered into the dark degraded substance; the celestial fire has fallen and kindled upon it, and will burn till it become bright and pure, the dross destroyed; and on the process angels are declared to be looking down with delight.

If there be one that is faithfully and boldly declaring himself for God, among the enemies of “*the Lord of Hosts*,” *that* is a “*jewel*.” For, strange and awful as it is, there are here on earth enemies to God, so many and so decided, that it is much to be his friend,—to be so, zealously and decidedly, in some situations! And those who are so, in such resolute contrariety, and zealous opposition, have even a value additional to their intrinsic worth, and such as they could not have, in the millennium. And this counteraction is itself made a cause of their greater brightness.

Wherever there is one who is earnestly and watchfully maintaining “*a conscience void of offence*,” amidst all the

business and temptations of the world, *that* is one of his "*jewels*." For this requires and implies a habitual recollection and holy fear of Him—a solemn sense of his presence and his will. It is to recall, ten thousand times, his commands, with obedient reverence. It is often to exercise self-denial for his sake. It is to summon off the spirit, the affections, the passions, when they are becoming too much drawn away, and involved with the world. It is a constant strife to continue to be, by the help of God, that which the world and temptation are constantly striving not to let him be.

If there be one who is seeking communion with God as his highest good, *that* is one of his "*jewels*." For this attraction evinces a conformity, a resemblance of nature—the true celestial magnetism. It shows the spiritual nature going out, as it were, from matter, from the body, from the earth, from all creation, in movement and aspiration toward its great Original. These must be peculiarly his, and his "*jewels*," that are of a nature tending to be near Him.

If there be one who strives to do what he can for the best cause—whose will is, that all on earth should be reduced to belong to God—zealous, shall we say, to increase his great Master's property, whose spirit says, "Come with me and be his," *that* is one of his "*jewels*."

If there be an aged faithful Christian, who says, "*Now Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace,*"—who has been for a very long time an object to compel men to see and acknowledge that there *is* something for God on earth,—this is a "*jewel*" just on the point of being detached from the baser matter.

All these are specimens of what "*the Lord of Hosts*" has in this world in a peculiar sense *his own*, and sets the highest value upon. They *are* his; and he says, "They *shall* be mine," at all times, and for ever; but especially, and with distinguishing marks, and acts, and display, of appro-

priation, "*in the day when he makes up his jewels.*" Through many hundred of thousands of days, this special treasure of his will have been in a scattered state on earth, and successively taken away out of sight. One by one, the angels have gathered and carried them off. What a day that will be, when they shall be all collected from all times and regions; when it shall be seen, as brought to account, *how much*, if we may so speak, this great system has been *directly worth* to God, in the number and value of saints which it shall have contained; how much the earth has yielded that is fit for a higher world. And that account will assuredly make it appear *worth* that such a system, such a world, should have been made, and sustained so long, for their sakes. They will be a memorial of it, after it is consumed by fire. No voice will say, "Not for the sake of *these* was it worth making such a globe." It will appear worth that the Son of God should have come upon it, to sojourn in affliction and humiliation, and to die. But great indeed must be there value!

There will be a collecting, an assembling of them together. And with great propriety; that the *effect* of the dispensation of redemption may be conspicuously displayed in this assembled evidence; that it may be seen what a vast merit there was to atone, and energy to transform. With propriety and necessity; for all men shall be removed from the world, and they must *not* go all, in a mingled throng, into the same region of dwelling elsewhere. The grand act of righteous separation *must* bring the saints together. And think of that stupendous knowledge and power which will secure that not one of them will be missing—will be lost. In *themselves* there will be no such power, as that every one should come, without fail, to the great appointment and assembly; *they* could not find out their way through unknown regions.

But an infinite sight and energy reaching to all and every

one, never having lost sight of them, will leave *not one* lost in the vastness of the scene; *not one* that was ever in the utmost obscurity in mortal life, little noted among men, and soon forgotten when removed; *not one* in the remotest corner of the earth, or island of the sea; *not one* that was attempted to be crushed and destroyed by hatred and persecution; *not one* that Satan did all he could to pluck out of the Sovereign Proprietor's possession, by artful seduction from faith and holiness—by attempts to terrify out of hope—with ambition to carry into the infernal world, a spoil from the kingdom of Christ.

When each sees all, each may wonder at the vigilance, the affectionate care, and the mighty power that will have brought them all together—after preserving them all separately, in an infinite variety of circumstances, and so many ages. And then, when the “*jewels*” are “*made up*,” HE will pronounce, “*they are mine.*” What triumph to hear it! What congratulation with one another! What congratulation of the innumerable angelic “*hosts* ;” for it is “*the Lord of Hosts*” that will say, “*they are mine!*”

And what a situation must that be—in place, and circumstances, and felicity, and glory—in which he will assign their abode within the immediate manifestation of his presence! He will also confer on them an inconceivably more glorious brightness, and beauty, and value, *as in themselves*, than they had on earth. And this to shine “*as the stars, for ever and ever.*”

Looking at this prospect, which of us can be content that *his* soul should be wanting, when “*the Lord of Hosts*” shall “*make up his jewels?*” Who can bear the thought of being cast among the baser rejected things of the creation, and for Him to say, “*That is not mine—take it away?*”

Date Due

Also, n

A SEE

1. H

2 &

4. P

5. L

6. P

7. L

8. S

9. A

10. A

11. L

12 &

13. V

15. F

16. A

17. C

8. F

19. L

20. C

21. C

22. I

23. I

24, I

26. I

27. I

28. I

29. I

33. I

34. I

34. I

34. I

34. I

34. I

34. I

34. I

34. I

34. I

34. I

34. I

34. I

34. I

34. I

34. I

34. I

34. I

34. I

34. I

34. I

34. I

34. I

34. I

34. I

Library Bureau Cat. no. 1137

- 12 WHITE'S NATURAL HISTORY OF SELBORNE, with notes by SIR WM. JARDINE and others, edited, with large additions, by ED. JESSE, Esq. With 40 highly-finished Wood Engravings (Coloured, 7s. 6d.)
13. DIDRON'S CHRISTIAN ICONOGRAPHY, with 150 beautiful Engravings. In 2 Vols. Vol. I.
14. REDDING ON WINES. New and Revised Edition, with 20 beautiful Woodcuts.
- 15 & 16. ALLEN'S BATTLES OF THE BRITISH NAVY. New Edition. Enlarged by the Author. Numerous fine Portraits on Steel. 2 Vols.
- 17 & 18. ROME IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY. Fifth Edition, in 2 Vols., with 34 fine Steel Engravings, and Index.

Also, uniform with the STANDARD LIBRARY, price 5s.,

BOHNS' ANTIQUARIAN LIBRARY.

1. BEDE'S ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY, & THE ANGLO-SAXON CHRONICLE.

2. MALLET'S NORTHERN ANTIQUITIES. By Bishop PERCY. With Abstract of the Exhibition Catalogue.

3. WILSON

BV

4. SIX

4253

5. ELLIOTT

F75523

6. CHILTON

AUTHOR

v.2

7. EARL

Foster, J.

8, 10, 11

TITLE

Lectures. v.2

3. KEIG

DATE
LOANED

BORROWER'S NAME

DATE
RETURNED

4, 15, 16

JUN 1 '64

LETTERING

BARBAU

SOURRIE

BUNYAN

all

BYRON'S

not

COLERIDGE

COWPER

Poet

ENCYCLO

editi

HEBER'S

HERRICK

OE MILL

LONGFEL

side

MILTON'S

Cl

POSSIB

20

